

**Lessons Learned from**  
**The Book of Ephesians**

**Four Principles of the  
Christian Way of Life**

**Book 1**



**Putting the Pieces Together  
so the Life of Christ is Manifest among the  
People of God!**

**Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers**

# Foreword

*This is the first in a two-book series based upon Pastor Kevin's series of sermons from Ephesians.*

The fellowship of Vistoso Community Church is an unusual collection of people. They have varied backgrounds, come from many parts of the country, and are a mix of those living here full-time as well as winter visitors. These, however, are not the factors that make them unique. This congregation is special because they gather, week in and week out, to hear the Word taught, and, when they are convinced they are hearing the truth, they respond to it.



There is no greater encouragement, for one who proclaims the Word, than an audience who will listen to it. For that, I am deeply grateful to you and the Lord for blessing me in such a way.

In His grace,

Kevin Redig

*All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NKJV (1992 edition) or the NIV (1984 edition).*

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# Introduction

It is not uncommon for me to preach about such subjects as the grace of God, the blessings that are ours in Christ, and the calling to live a life worthy of who and what we are in Christ. Likewise, it is not unusual for me to make it clear that we can only do so through the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Nonetheless, I am not sure that I have adequately explained the practical aspects of living such a life—how the *pieces* fit together. I have not covered the perfection of God’s plan and provision for the Christian Life. Our study in the book of Ephesians has ignited a passion within me to do so.

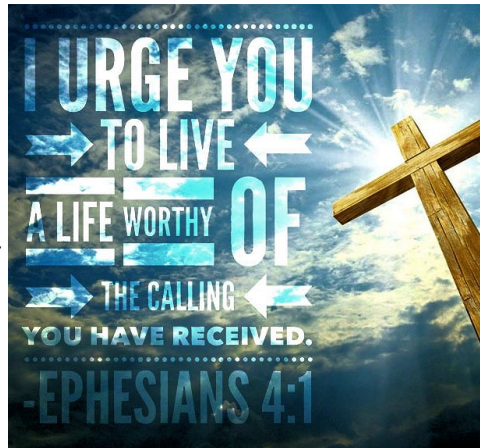
In simple and straightforward language, the Christian Life starts with the new life that is ours in Christ. The book of Ephesians tells us what that life should look like, as well as what to avoid. Of

equal importance, it then lays out the means by which we are to live the kind of life God would call “worthy.”

There is much more that can be added from other portions of Scripture. I urge you to do so, if for no other reason than to confirm the conclusions we reach together. But, the purpose of this study

is to reveal to you God’s framework for the Christian Life as neatly contained and concisely described for us in this one great New Testament epistle. I believe it is God’s blueprint and His grace provision for the Church.

The lack of power within the Church, in terms of compelling witness and transformed lives, is largely because far too many Christians are unaware of God’s plan or they have



chosen to replace it with other flashier approaches which will always be devoid of God's power. The consequences are visible across our land.

For our part, *“in His light we can see light.”* (Psalm 36:9) As His Word reveals what we have in Him and from Him, our walk of faith becomes much clearer. I pray we would respond and be blessed! Now, join me in putting the pieces together from the book of Ephesians.

This booklet is based upon a series of five messages on very closely related topics—topics that are meant to be seen as parts of a greater whole. I am going to give you as much detail as I think advisable, but right from the start I want to make sure you see the big picture. This *big picture* is four principles to live by—*Four Principles of the Christian Way of Life*.

- We have new life in Christ! (Ephesians 2:1-6)
- What not to do with this new life! (Ephesians 4:17-19)
- What to do with this new life! (Ephesians 4:1, Romans 6:13, Matthew 16:24-26)
- How to do it. The means to live the new life! (Ephesians 4:21-24)

This booklet discusses the first two principles. Book 2 discusses the last two principles, plus I have added two more sections: *Clarifying and Extending*, to provide a summary discussion, followed by a short *Epilogue*.



# Principle #1:

## We Have New Life in Christ!

The text for our first line of investigation is Ephesians 2:1-6. I suggest you spend a few minutes reading and reflecting upon the passage. Then, I have three observations to make on these verses:

- The Gospel is good news in light of a bad news situation.
- He giveth more grace.
- We must come to grips with our identity *in Christ!*

### The Gospel is Good News in Light of a Bad News Situation

<sup>1</sup>And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup>among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Ephesians 2:1-3

The “you” in Verse 1 is plural, as it is in Verse 2. In Verse 3 we read “we all” and “just as the others.” The picture developed in these first three verses is one that is true of every single one of us. I don’t have to know you well to know at last one thing about you. You, in turn, know the same thing about me! Every one of us was “dead!”

Dead! That one word describes every member of the human race with perfect accuracy and devastating results. This is God’s spiritual, not physical, evaluation of each and every one of us.

A newborn baby is spiritually dead. The same is true on the baby's first birthday. If something doesn't change, this is equally true on that baby's 18th and 80th birthdays.

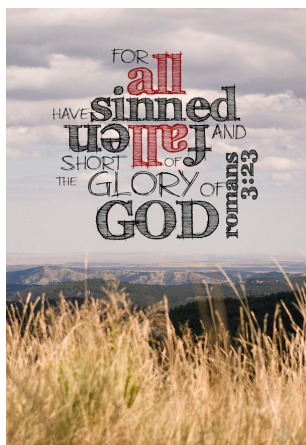
This paints the predicament of mankind in a whole new light. For we don't need to be religiously *tuned-up*. We don't need to polish our rough edges. We don't need healing. What does a dead man need? Life! And we are going to find out in the text that this is exactly what God provides as part of His plan of salvation.

The text then reveals that we are spiritually dead within the context of trespasses and sin. Trespasses can be considered those things done against God, against His will, His plans, and His purposes. Sin is anything that *misses the mark* of God's holy standards. So when the lost reject God's offer of salvation and try to live moral lives, even if they manage to minimize their sinful acts, they are still transgressors. As soon as we begin to understand this, we will naturally connect with Romans 3:23, which says:

*All have sinned and fallen  
short of the glory of God.*

Our response should be, "Of course! All are dead in *"trespasses and sin."* This is ultimately the same reason Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be *born again in order to see the kingdom of God*. For God can only have fellowship with, and heaven is only inhabited by, spiritually alive people.

Do you see mankind's problem? We need spiritual life, and yet we start off as far away from spiritual life as we can get. We start off spiritually dead! And it gets worse! If something isn't done about our condition of being *dead in trespasses and sins* before we die, it is going to become a permanent condition. We will be dead for all eternity.



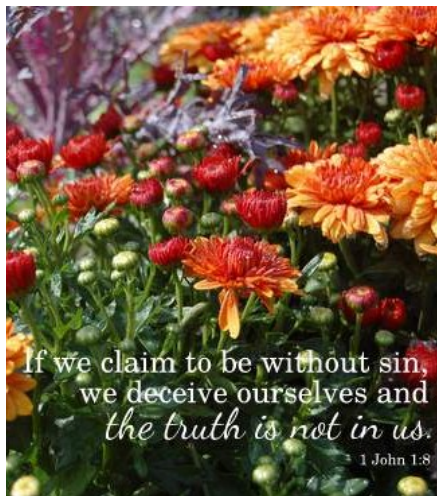
How do spiritually dead people manage their day-to-day existence? They walk according to the thoughts and behaviors of this world, which John describes as:

*...the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes  
and the boasting of what he has and does*

1 John 2:16

They may give into their baser tendencies—overt sins; or they may choose instead to adhere to some religious system of morality. Either way, the truth declared by the first few verses of the second chapter of Ephesians is that all are spiritually dead, in a condition that can be labeled as transgressor or sinner, an object of God's wrath. Ultimately, it is not about how bad any of us might be, it is about how lost we are! It is about how completely we are separated from God and how hopeless we are to do anything to change the situation.

Notice the emphasis in these opening verses is not on specific sins. Instead, the emphasis is on the outcome of trespasses and sin—death. Every member of the human race is born spiritually dead. From man's side of the equation, this is a hopeless, helpless situation that leaves us all hell-bound. We deal with the reality of this bad news situation in any number of ways. We console ourselves with our relative righteousness. We tell ourselves that we are not as bad as a certain person or group. We try to counter the bad news with religious works or some kind of moral code of our own making. In our day so many even try to dismiss the whole issue by claiming God isn't even there.



The problem with all of these approaches is that God has spoken clearly, and the one opinion that ultimately matters is in Ephesians 2:1-4. Because of the fall of man, we are all born dead in trespasses and sin and are objects of God's wrath. At best we can temporarily delude ourselves into thinking this is not so. But apart from what God is going to graciously provide in Jesus Christ, there is no way out and this reality will eventually catch up with each and every one of us.

If we consider the message of these few verses and then accept the meaning of the words and sentences, something amazing can happen. We can undergo a process the Bible calls repentance—our change of mind resulting from coming face-to-face with the truth. We can come to this text thinking we were *okay*, and realize that we are not, for we are spiritually dead like the rest. I thought I might be able to squeak into heaven, and now I know it is impossible! What am I to do? God help me, I need a Savior!



This is the place that we all need to reach. Our destiny without Christ is not good news, but accepting the reality of this bad news is part of having our eyes opened to our hopeless situation. This is what gives the *Good News* of the *Gospel* its intrinsic appeal.

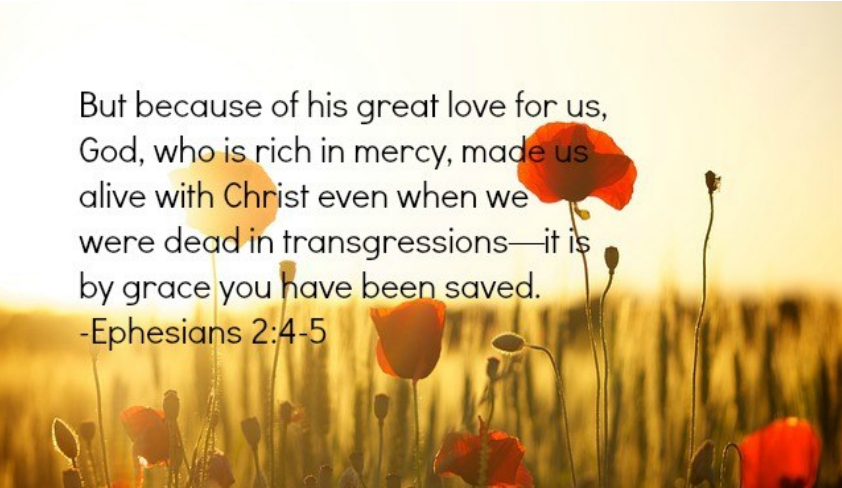
See if this analogy might help to clarify the situation. You go to the doctor for your annual checkup. After a number of tests your doctor meets with you in the company of

another doctor. This doctor says, “I want to do surgery.” Your immediate response is shocked surprise. Then the doctor shows you a series of test results and a scan and explains why doing surgery now is for the greater good and is necessary to prevent a much worse outcome later.

Do you see the analogy? God is the great healer of souls, who brings life out of death. He wants to save each one of us! We need to see the truth that the *scan* of Ephesians 2:1-4 proves that we are in desperate need of action before it is too late and our condition leads to the much worse outcome of eternal death. Our hopeless condition is not only what gives the Good News of eternal life its appeal, it is what makes it an imperative. For without it, there is only death in the future of every human being—eternal spiritual death.

Read the verses again! This isn't my own twist on them. This is from God to each one of us. You can't believe in a Savior who died for your sins until you see yourself as a sinner. We are all dead, and Jesus is the Savior sent by God to save!

As we move on to Verse 4, we are going to be introduced to a contrast with respect to our hopeless condition which is established by the word *but*.



But because of his great love for us,  
God, who is rich in mercy, made us  
alive with Christ even when we  
were dead in transgressions—it is  
by grace you have been saved.  
-Ephesians 2:4-5

This should be music to our ears, for it is our one and only hope! You see:

*...while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.*

Romans 5:8

And not only that:

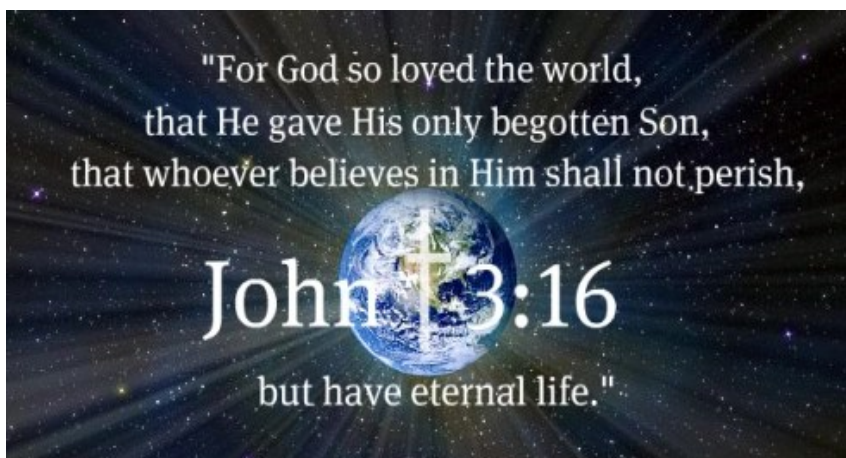
*...when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.* Titus 3:4-5

Who initiated salvation? God did! Did we turn to God and call for help? Absolutely not! He acted. He called. Any response on our part is a response to His efforts in reaching out to us. God is the prime-mover in salvation and He acted on our behalf before we even knew we were lost.

As this sinks in, take a moment to revel in the following thought:

*Though our sin is inconceivably repulsive to His holiness, our soul is inconceivably precious to Him.* (Ruth Paxson)

I am not aware of a specific verse of Scripture that exactly matches this quote, but how else do you explain God initiating salvation on our behalf? How else would you explain John 3:16?



The whole thrust of what we have been discussing is so clearly reinforced in Verse 5:

But God. . .even when we were dead in trespasses,  
made us alive together with Christ  
(by grace you have been saved).

You see we are not all at the same level of *badness*, but we are indeed at the same level of *deadness*. When we finally see ourselves as we really are before a holy God, the Good News of the salvation that is available in Jesus Christ becomes very good news indeed!



Who are those who have been made alive? The surrounding context answers this question for us:

- Those who trust (Ephesians 1:13)
- Those who believe (Ephesians 1:13)
- Those who exercise faith (Ephesians 2:8)

These are three ways of saying the same thing. The passage we are studying (Ephesians 2:1-6) is *bookended* by faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ as the means by which we are made alive with Christ.

*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word  
and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life. . .  
has passed from death to life. John 5:24*

Do you see it? It is faith, a specific belief in Christ, that leads to life, which entails a passing from a status of death to a status of life. That is exactly our subject. That also brings us to the extraordinary thing that God is going to do for all who turn to Him in faith. He is going to make us alive, spiritually alive, with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ!

## He Giveth More Grace

The topic of grace is on my heart. Yet I warn you from the outset of our discussion, there is much inbuilt resistance to it. We talk about grace, sing about it, and name our churches after it. But rarely do we understand its substance and often we reject it in practice.

Perhaps you are thinking, “How so? I would never attack grace!” I disagree. We often try to interact with God on the basis of works or grace plus works. It is very rare to find a person who has learned to accept the grace of God without trying to earn or deserve it. As an example, how many are really resting in the truth of Ephesians 1:6, that they are accepted by God because of their association with Jesus Christ and for no other reason? Instead, most of us feel more accepted on days when we feel our walk with the Lord is good and less accepted when it is not. That’s not grace, that’s works!

The grace of God offends the sensibilities of fallen man because it minimizes his or her capabilities and contributions. We are always trying to find a way to *shoehorn* ourselves into the picture. Listen carefully to the testimonies given by most Christians. Before you know it, the spotlight comes off of Christ and is redirected to the individual.

## How Does This Fit Our Study

How does this discussion of grace fit into our study in Ephesians Chapter 2? The answer is that we need to recognize that we are completely incapable—and I mean completely incapable—of doing anything to make ourselves spiritually alive! You ask, “Why?” The answer is right in the text; we are dead! What can a dead man do? What contribution can he make? To simply ask the question is all it takes to answer it. A dead man can do nothing! That’s why it says we are “*saved by grace.*” For grace is the concept that God does the work apart from any work or merit on our part.

In fact, the text expounds upon grace all the way down through Verse 9. God provides salvation, ours is to accept what He has provided: by faith—apart from works!

Now I know that some are thinking, “Wait a minute, if we have to exercise faith, isn’t that a work?” The answer to that is no! The Bible makes it very clear that faith and works are mutually exclusive. Let me show you:

*However to the man who does not work,  
but trusts God who justifies the wicked,  
his faith is credited as righteousness.*

Romans 4:5

Do you see how works and faith are contrasted against each other? It is straightforward. The only way to be justified before God is by trusting His provision of Jesus Christ and not ever by works! The Bible regularly uses a number of synonyms for faith, words like “*taste*,” “*look*,” and “*drink*” (Numbers 21:18, Psalm

34:8). The Bible does that to help us learn the lesson that faith is not a work.

Let me give you an example that might help explain why. My mom was the best cook ever. I had home-made everything until I left home for college. Although we had a dining room, we more often used a tablecloth covered ping-pong table in the family room, around which we could seat almost 20 people. Large gatherings of people for delicious meals were commonplace as I was growing up. As many times as I cleared dishes and brought seconds to people, I heard many, many people say, “Judy (my mom’s name), that was an absolutely delicious meal!” But do you know what, I never heard anyone say? “Judy, that was a very good meal, but I deserve some credit for eating it.” To trust in the work of God is not a work in the same way that there is no merit associated with looking, eating, and drinking.



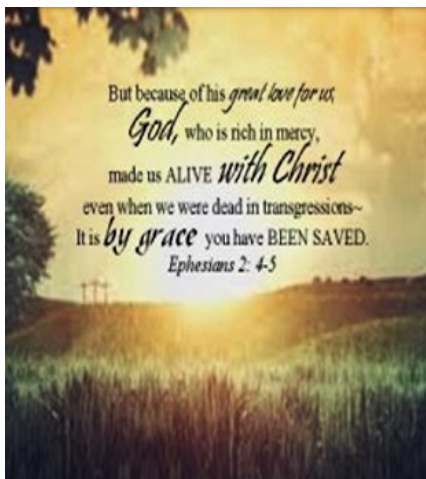
*God's Grace is a Gift!*  
*Unearned, Unmerited, Undeserved*

Rather, the merit, if there is any, is in the object of eating. In my example, the merit is in the meal that was prepared. When it comes to our salvation, all of the merit is in the object of our faith—the Lord Jesus Christ. In the same way that all of the effort is done by the one preparing a delicious meal, and eating is simply accepting what was prepared; so too all of the work of salvation was accomplished by Christ on the cross. Trusting in His finished work is simply accepting the sufficiency of what He did!

### Walking Through the Major Points

So with that introduction, let me walk you through some major points on the topic of “*He Giveth More Grace.*”

- **Starting point.** What is the starting point for every member of the human race? The answer is dead in trespasses and sins, by nature, an object of God’s wrath!
- **Solution.** The only answer to our condition is to be “*made alive.*” If your condition is one of beginning dead, then salvation consists of being made alive. And this salvation, that includes new life—the very life of Christ, is a gift from God apart from our earning it or deserving it. That’s what makes it grace.
- **Definition.** Let’s develop a working definition of grace? Many have been helped to understand grace by this simple definition: unmerited favor. Grace is a blessing from God that we neither work for nor deserve. After studying its Biblical usage, in both the Old and New Testaments, I would suggest that we can expand upon



that definition with the following:

*Grace is a summary term for the principle:  
God has an abundant answer for the  
ever-changing needs of His children.*

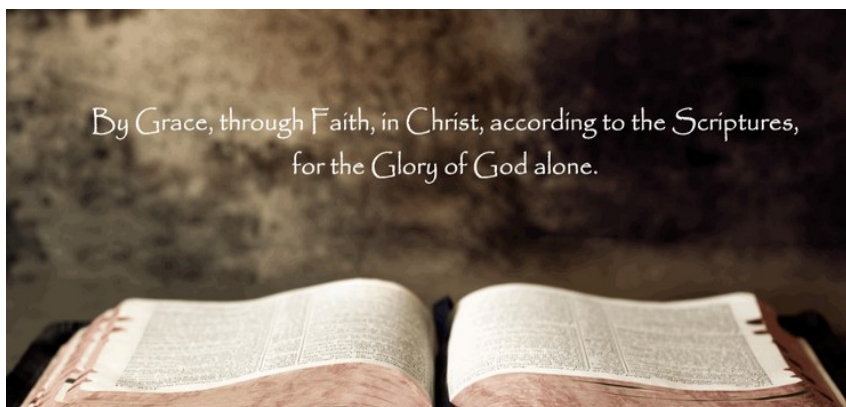
Now let's apply this discussion of Grace to our context in Ephesians. Man is dead in trespasses and sins and can do nothing to help himself. The initiator in our salvation is God Himself. We didn't figure out we were dead and try to help ourselves. In fact, it was just the opposite. If circumstances are going pretty well for us, we can delude ourselves into thinking eternity is too far off for concern. Or, we can rationalize that we are better than most. The Word describes this situation perfectly: no one would come unless the Father draws (John 6:44), the cross draws (John 12:32), and the Spirit convicts (John 16:8). As people who are lost and unaware, we don't even realize we have a need. God's grace provision is to draw us and then to provide in the person and work of Jesus Christ everything necessary to save us. Furthermore, the grace of God is what ensures that we have everything we need for life and godliness after we place our faith in Christ—up to and including the point that He calls us home to be with Him. It surely is Amazing Grace!

- **Definitive statement.** Ephesians 2:8-9 is not the definitive statement of grace, Ephesians 2:3-6 is! I say this because it is quite common to be taken to Ephesians 2:8-9 in order to prove that the lost are saved by grace, that salvation is apart from works, and that all God is asking of us is faith in what His Son has done on our behalf. Now these verses are indeed exceedingly important, but what I want you to realize is that the ground-work on grace has been laid in the preceding verses we are studying. We were dead, God made us alive, raised us up and seated us with Him in the heavenlies. He did all of this apart from requiring one single bit of work on the part of any lost human being.

By the time we get down to Verse 8, it is as if the letters QED are in front of it. These letters stand for a Latin term which means, “that which was to be demonstrated.” It is often used in mathematical proofs. In other words, we can be saved when we grasp what God has done for us in His Son—that our salvation has been demonstrated to be by grace apart from works. All that is required on the part of a lost person is to receive, by faith, the benefit of the work God has done. In doing so, that person is *saved* from an eternity apart from God to an eternity with Him!

- **Language support.** Even the grammar in these passages supports the concept of grace! There are three verbs in Verses 5-6, and they are translated: *made alive*, *raised up*, and *seated* in the heavenlies. All three are in the aorist tense, establishing what happened at the moment of faith. They are in the active voice, indicating that this is something that God accomplished. Finally, they are in the indicative mood, indicating a statement of reality. And what prompted the action of these three verbs? The context makes it clear: *you also trusted* (Ephesians 1:13), *having believed* (Ephesians 1:13), *through faith* (Ephesians 2:8).

Do you see why this is grace? God does all of the work and then He puts the matter to us for decision: accept or reject, respond in faith or persist in unbelief.



## We Make It More Difficult

On our part, we tend to *muddy the waters*. I was recently told by an individual who objected to the teaching of grace, that people are not saved until they reach a point where they have totally committed their lives to God. He went on to say that no one has ever been saved by faith alone. My heart aches for one caught in such error. That is absolute anathema to the text! Is it possible for a dead person to either commit or surrender his or her life? Not in a way that has any significance to God! It is only after we are new creations in Christ—through faith—that the concept of submission becomes relevant.

We will spend time later in this study learning about God's call to *present* this new life we have in Christ to Him and how to do it. In the meantime, consider the very organization of the book of Ephesians. Chapters 1-3 are about what God has done for us in Christ. It is not until Chapter 4 that the issue of the quality of the life we live is even discussed. The reason for this is simply because there is no living a consecrated life until you first have a new life in Christ to consecrate! We need to understand the nature of that new life—that's what we are doing right now—before we can begin to wrestle with how to live it as "*unto the Lord*."

## Consider the Order

Let me take a few moments to teach a principle that may help you manage your own tendencies to turn from grace to law. It starts by establishing for yourself which of the following is the divine sequence. By that I mean in what order does God deal with mankind:

Devotion ➡ Blessing

Blessing ➡ Devotion

The question is: Does God ask for us to be devoted first, and if we are, He will bless us? Or, is it the other way around? Does He provide blessing first, apart from any merit on our part, and then ask us to respond in devotion?

To answer this question is to choose between *Law* and *Grace*! I believe the Bible is quite clear on this matter.

*For the Law was given through Moses;  
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:17*

After our study in the book of Ephesians, you should be very comfortable answering this question with the conviction that it is blessing first and then devotion. It is as simple as Chapter 4 follows Chapters 1-3. For we have seen in Chapters 1-3 all about the blessings we have in Christ, the identity we have in Christ, and the new life we have in Him. In fact, by the third verse of the very first chapter, we have already been told that we, as Christians, are recipients of

*... every spiritual  
blessing in Christ.*

All of this is without God asking us to do one single thing. This does not mean that under grace we are softening or ignoring the sanctified life which the follower of Jesus is called to live. On the

contrary, Chapters 4-6 raise the bar for the Christian Life to a supernaturally high level. Before we get to the quality of the Christian Life to which God is calling us, we must understand that it starts from understanding who and what we are "*in Christ*." This standing is a marvelous and gracious blessing from Him which our devotion is meant to follow.

The alternative is to strive to eke out the Christian Life on our own strength which can be no more than a pitiful example of living below what God has for His children, living with an unhealthy focus upon self. The Christian Life is what God can do through one who is weak and dependent upon Him, one who is resting in the blood of the cross for the remission of sins, one who understands Christ's acceptance and knows no other way of living the Christian Life than yielding that new life in Christ to God for His purposes. Such a life draws the lost and encourages the saved.



## We Have to Come to Grips with Our Identity “in Christ!”

The truth of who and what we are *in Christ* is foundational to all that we have been discussing. We must see the clear revelation within God’s Word, and then accept the facts as communicated by God as true! This is what it means “*to reckon*” or to count on something as being true. That’s what faith really is, it is accepting God’s facts as truth! Let me lay out the facts of our identity from two standpoints.

1. **Made Alive.** We have seen in Ephesians 2:1-6 that the believer in Jesus Christ goes from being dead in trespasses and sins to being alive, raised up, and seated in the heavenly realms. Look at Ephesians 1:20.

... which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. ...

Christ died bearing our sins and then was made alive. Not only was He made alive, but He was raised up and seated in the heavenly realms far above all else. Do you see it? Our being made alive, raised up, and seated in the heavenlies is not independent of Christ. Instead, it is dependent upon the fact that He led the way. It is only because we are *in Him* that we too have been made alive, raised, and seated. God has so identified us with Christ that it could be no other way. Where He has led, He intends for us to follow.

2. **In Union.** These verses provide the greatest panorama you will ever see.
  - To explain, it is necessary to start with a short Greek lesson. Let me introduce you to the preposition *sun*, pronounced *soon*. It is a very important preposition denoting union. It is typically translated *with* or *together* and lexicons point out that it connotes a much closer association than related prepositions meaning *alongside* or *associated with*.

- I thought it worth the time to provide this technical information, because Ephesians 2:5-6 has three compound verbs—made alive, raised up, and seated in the heavenlies. These compound verbs consist of the main verb and the preposition *sun*. These three verbs are literally: made alive-with, raised up-with, and seated-with. These verbs are talking about the closeness of the union that every child of God has with the Lord Jesus Christ. What's even more amazing is the extent of this union as depicted in Scripture. It is the most amazing panorama of grace you will ever see!

*God. . .made us alive together with Christ. . .*

*Ephesians 2:5*

*Therefore if anyone is in Christ,  
he is a new creation. . . II Corinthians 5:17*

*. . .our old man was crucified with Him. . .*

*Romans 6:6*

*God. . .raised us up together. . . Ephesians 2:6*

*God. . . made us sit together in the  
heavenly places in Christ Jesus. . . Ephesians 2:6*

*. . .and you are complete in Him. . .*

*Colossians 2:10*



Did you even begin to understand the riches of what God had done for you in Christ when you turned to Him in faith and trusted in Christ for eternal life? Not only has He made you alive with Christ, but you are a new creation in Him, you were crucified with Him, raised up with Him, seated with Him in the heavenly places, and, most amazing of all, you are complete in Him. Does the Christian Life seem like straining to somehow please God and getting Him to bless us? Or, on the authority of God's Word, has He already blessed us out of all proportion to what we could ever deserve? Do we need to somehow be good enough to be worthy, or is it possible that we are so intimately related to the Son that God already sees us as worthy? Do we need to strive with all our might? Or, can we turn to the grace of God time and again that we might, by faith, appropriate what He has already provided that we might grow into what we already are in Christ? Do we lay our heads down at night and thank God that we are complete in Christ? If not—we should!

There is nothing else like the Christian Life! It is compelling, it is winsome, and it is true! Although there is much more to say, for now, we will leave it to the future unfolding of the text of Ephesians. Let me close with our beginning principle: ***We have new life in Christ!*** We received this new life by coming to God through His Son:

*He who has the Son has life. . .and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I John 5:11*

And to be as clear as it is possible to be:

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. I John 5:13*

We have life by having the Son, and we have the Son through faith in who He is and what He has done for us. He is the only-begotten Son of God who went to the cross to bear our sin, to die in our place, that the justice of God would be satisfied. His work is sufficient, ours is to trust in that work! Why would anyone reject so great a salvation?

## Principle #2:

### What Not To Do With This New Life

The call to respond to the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospel of John, or the early chapters of the Book of Acts, is found in the midst of narratives depicting lost people coming face-to-face with the Gospel message. The Gospel has as its object:

- **Who Jesus is.** He is the eternally existent Son of God who took on humanity at His first coming that He might represent the entire human race as the last Adam.
- **What Jesus did.** He bore the sins of all mankind upon Himself, and then received the judgment we deserved, dying in our place, that the just demands of a holy God would be satisfied by the debt paid. That's the work of salvation—authored, executed, and declared satisfactory by God and God alone.



God turns to mankind and simply asks for a response. The response He is looking for is one of faith, to trust in who Christ is and what He did for us as the one and only means of salvation. We see our need before a Holy God, we understand God's provision in the person and work of Christ, and we respond in faith. This is what is on the line: Will we turn from all manner of emptiness, whether it be blatant worldliness or sincere religion, and turn in faith to Christ? If we do, we will receive the remission of sins and the gift of eternal life. Should we not, there is nothing else that can be done. For there is no other path to, or means of, salvation.

That's the message of the Gospel! And this we declare in obedience to God's calling upon our lives as His ambassadors and witnesses.

*I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins. John 8:24*

*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12*

*All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name. . . Acts 10:43*

I have given you this introduction because sometimes we consider Christianity, in its entirety, to be the spread of this Gospel message with the hope that some will turn in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. We teach it to our children and grandchildren that they might be saved, and we support missions that this salvation message might be spread to the ends of the earth. But to view the spread of the Gospel as the sum of Christianity, important as that is, is to fail to take into account: grow in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18); go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-f); and deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow after me (Luke 9:23). Gospel believing is not the end of the Christian Life—it is its entry point.

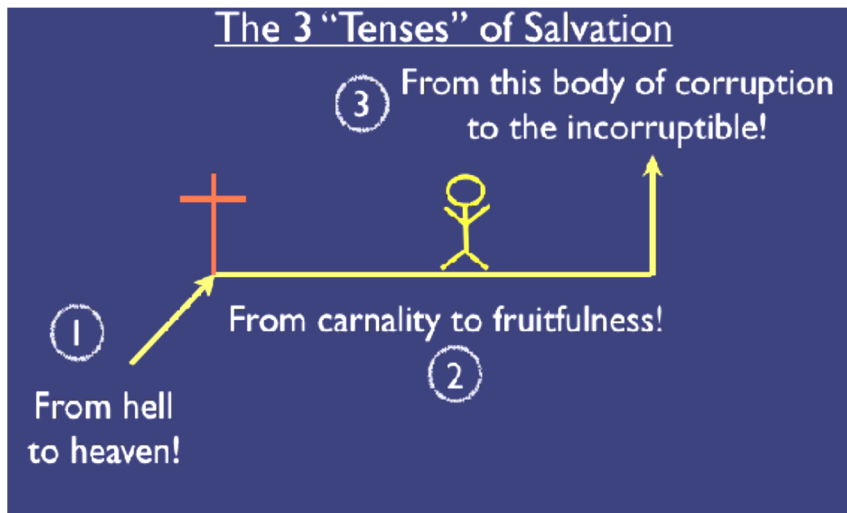
## **Redeeming the Time**

As soon as we have entered the Christian Life through faith, the words of Ephesians 5:15-16 declare what is next:

*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

As Christians, we are to be careful not to waste the days that God gives us. But rather, we are to make the most of them. We are to “redeem the time!”

We are not to squander the days we have as new creations in Christ by giving into the desires of the flesh. But we are called to walk by the Spirit that we might produce the fruit of the Spirit. This is perfectly illustrated in the following diagram.



Our salvation begins at Point 1, when we place our faith in Jesus Christ and are transferred from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. In this first tense of salvation we become the recipients of eternal life. (Colossians 1:13, John 3:16) This, by way of note, is a permanent transfer.

The diagram illustrates that it doesn't stop there. There is a second aspect, or tense, to God's plan of salvation. It consists of the number of days that God has given us between the time we place our faith in Christ and the time He calls us home to be with Him at Point 3 in the diagram. This is what I am referring to when I use the term *Christian Life*. These are the days we are to redeem from the potential of carnality to fruitfulness. I trust we will be found faithfully engaged in doing so when the Lord one day delivers us from this body of corruption to that which is incorruptible—our new resurrection bodies.

The book of Ephesians isn't so much about entry into the plan of God, the first phase of our salvation. It is about what God has done for us as the result of receiving Christ by faith and the high nature of the call upon our lives as believers. The sequence with which these two ideas are developed within the text of Ephesians is very important.

- First, the blessings that are available for every child of God are succinctly described as “*every spiritual blessing in Christ!*” (Ephesians 1:3) God then establishes an identity for us that is summed up in the prepositional phrase “*in Christ.*” In short, as the result of our relationship to Christ, we have a position, possessions, and privileges beyond anything we could ever have designed or imagined. What a shame to be unaware of or apathetic toward such blessing from the hand of God.
- The second half of the book of Ephesians moves on to the kind of life that a person, with this kind of identity and glorious future, should be living. We shouldn't be the least bit surprised that with this kind of foundational blessing, the calling on our lives as Christians is going to be very high—supernaturally high. Sure enough, Ephesians 4:1 says it this way:

*...walk worthy of the calling to which  
you have been called.*

The origin behind the word translated *worthy* comes from the marketplace and carries the idea of getting your money's worth in terms of weight or volume. Within the context of the Christian Life, we are being called to live a life that is of equivalent weight to the identity we have in Christ. In other words, our Christian Life is to balance the weight of our blessings.



On the one hand, we should expect nothing less. On the other hand, we should be asking ourselves, “Who could possibly live up to this calling?”

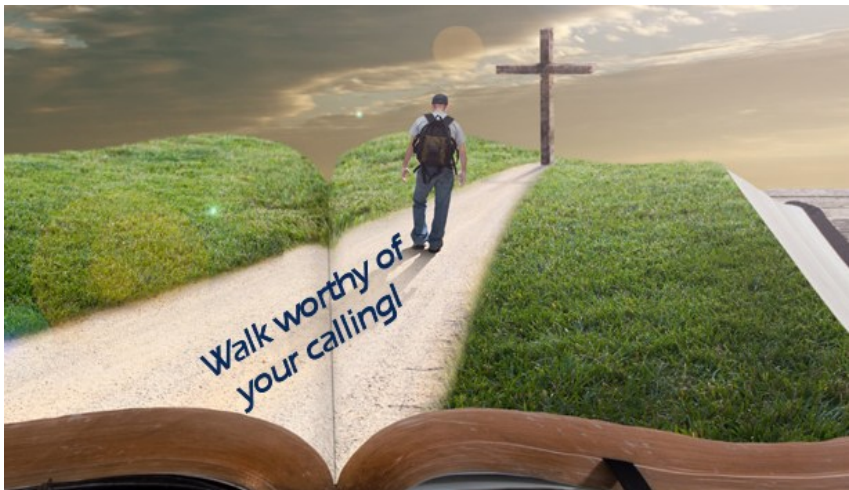
## What Not to Do

With this as background, we have arrived at the principle upon which I now wish to focus. Given that we have new life in Christ and are called to live out that life in such a way that it is of *equivalent weight* to what God has provided in Christ, I want to first investigate *what not to do with this new life!* I want to make absolutely certain there is no ambiguity on this matter, no confusion. I want to make sure we understand that there are boundaries and those boundaries—the places we are not to go—can be found beginning in Ephesians 4:17:

- ***This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord.*** . . . Paul begins by speaking from his authoritative capacity as an apostle of Christ, with the phrase “*testify in the Lord,*” adding a great deal of force to what is coming. This is most definitely meant to get our attention.
- ***...that you should no longer...*** I like the King James translation because it uses the word “***henceforth***” to translate this phrase. The idea is: from this moment forth—no longer. What moment do you suppose Paul has in mind? Why the moment of obtaining new life in Christ by means of faith in the finished work of the cross. From the moment we become a new creation in Christ—from the very moment we place our faith in Him—there are some things that we should no longer be doing.
- ***...walk...*** This is a word we have looked at many times before. It is a compound word that literally refers to the “*path carved out by our footsteps,*” and in this way refers to the moment by moment way each one of us lives out our lives.

- ***...as the rest of the Gentiles walk...*** The word translated Gentiles is the word *ethnos*, which is the root of such English words as *ethnic*. Generally, it is used to contrast the peoples of all other nations with the Jews. However, I don't think that is actually the contrast Paul has in mind, for the church in Ephesus is primarily Gentile. What he is trying to say is that the saved people that are associated with the Church should not be living lives that look like the unsaved—those outside of the Church.

Already we can draw some very clear conclusions regarding God's intent for His people. In a direct and powerful way, Paul is saying that those who have been saved through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ should not, under any circumstances, continue to live like the lost of this world. If you have been following the flow of Ephesians, is that any kind of a surprise? For God saved us by His grace, and in doing so made us alive, raised us up, and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms. He gave us a marvelous identity in His Son. He has called us to live a life of equivalent weight to who and what we are in Him.



To continue to live enmeshed in the kinds of things the lost think about, care about, and hope for would be a complete disconnect with who and what we are in Christ.

*Henceforth, from the moment of salvation forward, the saved are no longer to walk as the lost!*

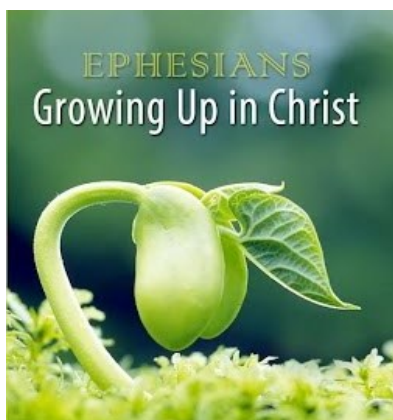
No bending, no equivocation, and no pretending that this is not an issue. It could be no other way once we understand what God has done *for us* and His call *upon us*.

At this point you may be thinking, “Why are you making such a firm point about this? It is almost as if you are issuing a warning. You must think this is important.” I do! This is a good time to be as clear as possible about a very important point of Biblical balance. On the one hand, I preach grace through and through. No person is saved apart from the grace of God, and no saved person lives the Christian Life apart from the enabling grace of God. Furthermore, Christians need to learn to turn to the grace of God as their first option for every need, every crisis, and every difficult circumstance. For as God told Paul:

*My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.* II Corinthians 12:9

You see, it is not about us addressing our weaknesses with an extra measure of fortitude, it is about us appropriating

His grace to overcome our weaknesses. By becoming a people dependent upon God in every and all circumstances, we begin to display the life of Christ in us, which is our hope of glory. By doing this, we bring credit and renown to God by what He can do through a sinner saved by His grace.



On the other hand, this theological position is often attacked. There are those who will erroneously claim that emphasizing grace gives people a license to sin, that grace leads to a sloppy Christian Life. These naysayers claim that all this talk about the marvelous position we have in Christ doesn't put enough pressure on people to live up to their responsibilities. They say that being holy is something you have to really work at with all your might!

I have a few questions for those who feel that an emphasis on grace is unfounded. First, does grace in Scripture ever promote a sloppy Christian Life? Second, how does dependence upon God, rather than self, ever manifest itself as a license to sin? I mentioned a Biblical point of balance. If our need of the grace of God for every aspect of the Christian Life is the first point of balance, then the image of the supernatural life that grace enables is the second.

Follow this very carefully so that there is no confusion. The very same pages of Scripture that teach of the new life we have in Christ, provide these insights:

- Teaches us that henceforth we are to no longer walk as the world does (Ephesians 4:17).
- Encourages us to walk worthy of the calling we have received (Ephesians 4:1).
- Plainly states that it is God's will that we be sanctified (I Thessalonians 4:3).
- Reminds us that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Jesus (II Corinthians 5:15).

The call to holiness, sanctification, and consecration for the Christian is clear and fixed. The call to "*come out from them and be separate*" is as historical and fundamental to relationship with God as it is possible to be. But at the same time, this calling is so high and so demanding that, apart from the grace of God, not a single one of us has any chance of coming even remotely close. And that brings us full circle to where we started, the grace of God.

If I were going to give a short testimony of what I have learned about the Christian Life along the way, it would be something like this:

1. It is a good thing that I have been saved by grace, otherwise I would have undone what God has graciously bestowed on many occasions.
2. It is a good thing that I have an identity and standing as a grace blessing from God. For the certainty of my peace, acceptance, and future with Him is what allows me to get over failure and continue to follow after Him.
3. It is a good thing that the grace of God is greater than my weaknesses and can accomplish all that God desires through me. I have found that no amount of dedication and commitment comes even close to enabling me to live the life I know the Lord desires. At best, I can produce a pharisaical self-righteousness that falls far short of what it means to be:



... clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 13:14

The Christian Life is supernatural in calling and is going to require supernatural enabling. God provides that enablement, apart from my deserving it or working for it. The power to live the Christian Life is provided

in the same way in which my salvation was provided—by the grace of God!

If you are following me, then you will agree that grace as a license to sin is the furthest thing from a correct understanding of grace as it is possible to be. It is the grace of God, and only His grace, that allows us to live a sanctified life such that we might one day hear Him say:

*Well done, My good and faithful servant!*  
Matthew 25:23

I have heard it said by some that the only way to keep people in line is through the threat and constant fear of the judgment of God. As for me, I long for the devotedness that is developed as I understand and appropriate by faith all that the grace of God has supplied. I do so upon the authority of His Word:

*My grace is sufficient for thee. . .* II Corinthians 12:9

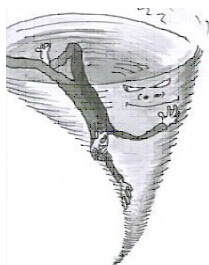
As we return to the text beginning in Ephesians 4:17, you may be wondering exactly what it means to walk according to the world? We will find our text in Ephesians to be very helpful in revealing the pattern of worldliness that we might avoid these worldly traps:

- It begins with the ***futility of their mind***. The word translated *futility* means emptiness, void of truth, or morally empty. The mind is part of the soul, and so what we have is a picture of a soul where the thoughts are empty of substance and morally without structure. In contrast to the things of God, the thinking of the world is empty, vain, and without substance! You can count on it, those experiencing the futility of the mind are also going to have behavior that includes a morality that will always be in opposition to the nature of He who is holy!

How does a lost person end up with such an *empty* pattern of thinking? The text goes on to tell us.

- The understanding of the spiritually dead world around us is **darkened**. The truth of God's ways are largely absent because the revelation of God as contained in His Word is either absent or has been rejected.
- **They are alienated from the life of God.** This is not only a natural consequence of being dead in trespasses and sin, but is also because of ***the ignorance that is in them and the blindness of their heart.*** Do you see the problem? Ignorance of the ways of God and a heart that is hardened against the things of God leads to an individual who is alienated from God. Naturally, the life that is lived from such a condition is not going to look anything like the calling God has upon those who are His.
- Depending upon the balance of forces within a society between those with a Biblical worldview and those with **futile** thinking, there may be a certain stability for that society. What happens when those acting from a Biblical perspective are few and futile thinking is allowed to run its course? The process continues:

*Being past feeling, have given themselves over  
to lewdness, to work all uncleanness  
with greediness. Ephesians 4:19*



This is a very sobering passage. As a people persist in unbelief and harden themselves to God and His ways, something happens. There is a downward spiral that occurs. First, the restraints on satisfying the lusts of the flesh become less and less. Then there is a move toward every kind of impurity. A greediness for the things of the flesh that reaches the point of idolatry.

It is in this context that, as Christians, we need to hear loud and clear the proclamation of Ephesians 4:20:

*But you have not so learned Christ. . .*

## **Some Application**

Let's consider some application based upon what we have observed and learned from our text. There is a great deal of explanatory power in this passage. It makes clear how the growing Christian and the lost unbeliever can live in the same world, have access to the same *news*, exposure to the same societal circumstances, and be absolutely miles apart in terms of the conclusions they reach.

Let me give you an example: If you asked a reasonably mature Christian, "What do you see as the essential issues of our day? What matters the most?" What kind of answers do you suppose you would get? Might those answers involve major moral concerns—issues of marriage, family, and increasing moral depravity. Might they involve issues of security and stability—terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and so on. How about if you ask the lost world around us the same questions? Do you think you will get the same responses? To give you a sampling, I pulled examples of trending topics from recent news reports:

- In England, there has been a recent uproar over new polymer bank notes. The reason—someone found out that they use a small amount of an animal product in making the polymer. This means the banknotes are not really vegan in nature. This has caused such a level of moral outrage in England that they are thinking of pulling the notes or making other changes.
- In France, the government banned a commercial showing happy children afflicted with Down syndrome. Their rationale: It might dissuade someone from having an abortion who has been informed their developing baby has this genetic abnormality.

It is impossible to read the news without finding more examples. Consider the moral outrage over a Texas statute which requires fetal remains to be treated as human remains. Consider the entire transgender debate and the obsessive preoccupation with the whole global warming/ carbon credit/green debate that has dominated our news for the past few years.



This is what happens when you have the futility of the soul. The emptiness sucks in all kinds of gibberish and then gets on its soapbox to spew it all back out again. By the time you are reading this, there will be a whole new set of silly things occupying the minds of those who have hardened their hearts and given themselves over to the things of this world.

I hope you see the thrust of what Paul is saying. From the moment we become Christians, from that point forward, we need to take an abrupt change in path. No longer should we be following the footsteps of the world, but rather following where Christ is leading!

It is time to make sure we are absolutely clear on the application to us as Christians. How would you answer this question: "To whom is Ephesians 4:17-19 directed?" Does this apply to you and me as Christians or does it apply to the lost of this world? Is the passage putting us on notice that we must safeguard the identity that we have in Christ, or can it be safely ignored by those who have responded to the Gospel? What makes this such an important issue is that it determines the *lens* through which we view much of the New Testament.

Think this through with me. Are the New Testament epistles primarily divisive or cautionary in nature?

- **Divisive?** By divisive, I mean are the Epistles dividing their listeners into those who are saved and those who are not? Is there differentiation between those who have turned in faith to the person and work of Christ and those who have not? If the Scriptures are divisive, then those who “no longer walk as the rest” would be believers, and those who walk according to the thinking of this world would be unbelievers. I raise this issue because there are several theological systems which take exactly this position. These systems say that if you have the taint of the world about you, then that is proof that you are not truly saved. On the other hand, if you are truly saved, then this passage of Scripture does not apply to you since no *true* Christian would do such a thing!
- **Cautionary?** Are the New Testament epistles intended to be cautionary in tone? By that I mean, are they meant to warn Christians to avoid doing something which it is entirely possible for Christians to do. Are the Epistles meant to help us avoid pitfalls, avoid mistakes, understand risk? If that is the case, the passage we are studying is warning us that, although we may be new creatures in Christ with a heavenly position, it is entirely possible to walk according to the pattern of this world. We can end up living lives that look just like the lives of those who are lost. It is possible for us to care about what they care about and chase after what they chase after. To argue otherwise is to take the position that no one who has truly been born again has ever been caught up in chasing after material things, or neglected time with family in order to get that big promotion?

I am not making an argument solely based upon experience but based upon what the Bible teaches.

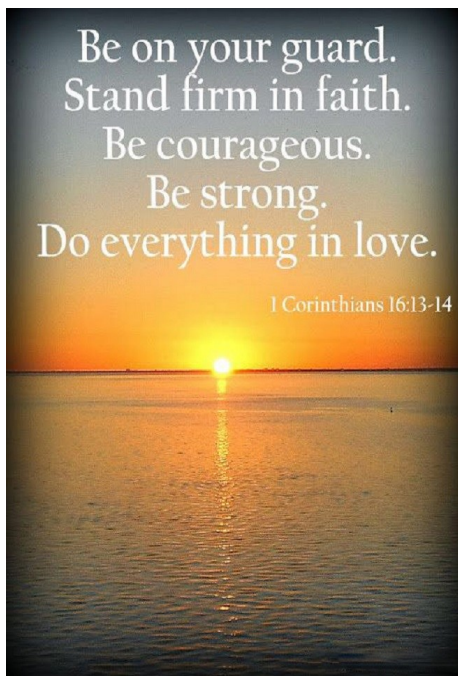
Did the Jews ever fail to be the separated people they were called to be? When Jesus called the Church of Laodicea lukewarm in Revelation 3:14-f, was that a commendation? Yet it was His Church! So, in summary, is there anything in the text of Ephesians 4:17-20, other than an established commitment to a particular system of theology, that would lead you to believe this passage is written to an audience of unbelievers? Absolutely not!

Is this even the kind of content that you direct toward an unbeliever? If it is, then you have a behavior-based Gospel and not a faith-based Gospel! The New Testament is filled with admonitions **to believers** that are clearly cautionary in tone:

*Jesus said, "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."  
Matthew 16:6*

*Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith;  
be courageous; be strong.  
I Corinthians 16:13*

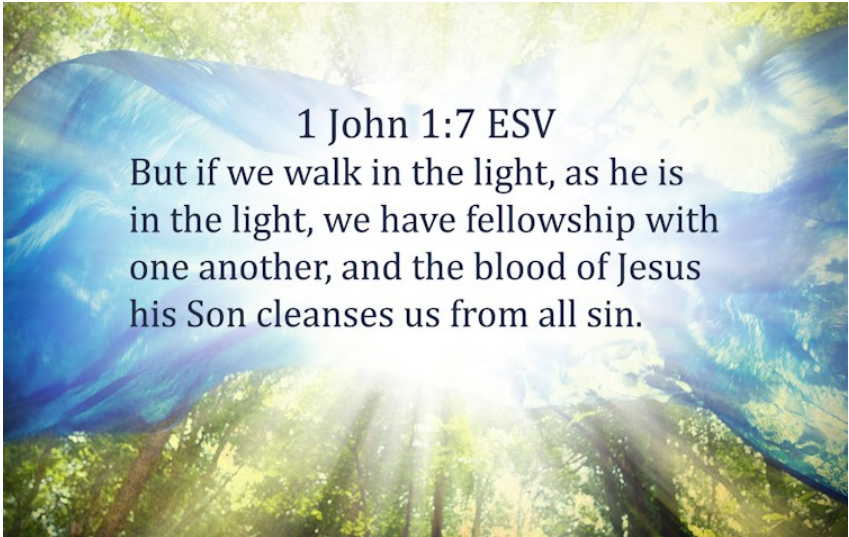
*Therefore, dear friends,  
since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.  
II Peter 3:17*



These example verses cover three writers of the New Testament. Further, they are just a small sampling of the dozens of like examples.

If we fail to recognize these as legitimate warnings to us as believers, then we are missing the point of nearly one third of the New Testament and we gravely risk compromising its intended function. As one apologist likes to say, *"There are a thousand angles at which we can fall, but only one at which we can stand straight!"* The Bible says it this way:

*walk in the light as He is in the light.* 1 John 1:7



### 1 John 1:7 ESV

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

The Old Testament is such a rich source of illustration for our understanding of the New Testament. Let's test our understanding of cautionary warnings. Are warnings from God cautionary so that His people would avoid the consequences of sin, or are they a means of dividing those who are saved from those who are lost. Let's apply this to the life of Solomon:

*As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.* 1 Kings 11:4

Solomon became truly tangled in the worldliness and lust patterns of his day (not all that dissimilar to the patterns of our day). Does this mean he wasn't saved? Applying some of the theological systems of our day, it would. But that is a position that is impossible to defend! Instead, Solomon's situation means that he ignored clear revelation from God by not avoiding marriage to foreign women and entangling alliances with other nations. This guidance, that he clearly ignored, was surely cautionary in nature in that it was meant to keep even someone as wise as Solomon from making costly mistakes.

If Solomon, as the wisest man on the face of the earth, suffered for failing to take note, how much more should we heed the caution in I Corinthians 16:13?

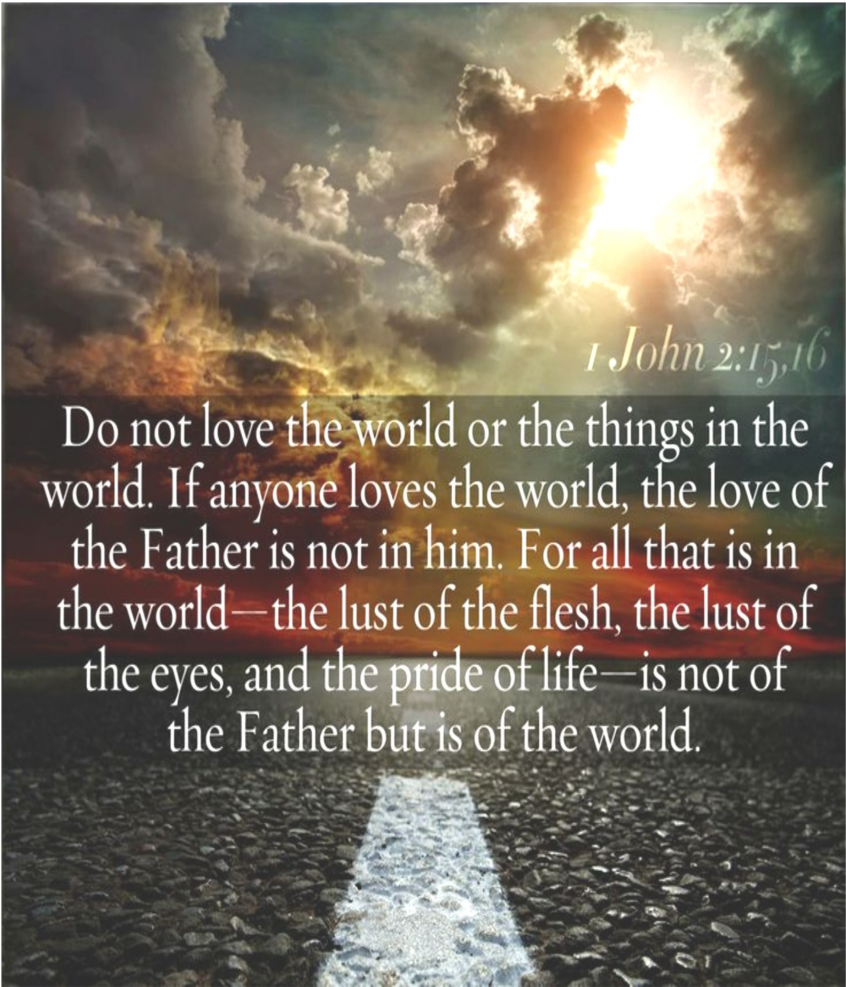
*Always be on guard, stand firm in the faith,  
be strong.*

So in closing, here is what we have learned: we may be new creatures in Christ, but there are very definitely some places we are not to go with that new life. There are certainly some things we must, at all costs, avoid. For it is completely inappropriate to take who we are in Christ, and the new life that is ours, and then walk blithely after the same things the world chooses to follow:

*...the cravings of our sinful nature, the lusts of our  
eyes, and boasting in what we have and do.*

I John 2:16

If you and I understand this lesson, then I hope it will have awakened an interest in asking the obvious follow-on question: "I see what I am not to do with the new life I have in Christ, but can you point me in the right direction and show me what I am to do?" That will be our next subject of investigation as we continue our study in Book 2 of this Ephesians series.



*1 John 2:15,16*

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.



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