

“Don’t Do That!”

Ephesians 4:17-19

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In Ephesians 4-6 Paul makes it emphatically clear that Christians are to live differently than unbelievers. They live differently because Christians are spiritually alive in Christ and unbelievers are spiritually dead. Paul accentuates this contrast in Ephesians 4:17-19 by first noting what lifestyle typifies unbelievers. He commands Christians to not be like them...

1. Unbelievers have futile thinking
“the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind” (17)
2. Unbelievers have darkened hearts
“being darkened in their understanding” (18a)
3. Unbelievers are spiritual zombies
“excluded from the life of God” (18b)
4. Unbelievers are willfully ignorant
“the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart” (18c)
5. Unbelievers are desensitized and immoral
“having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality” (19)

Study Notes:

4:17—“walk”—Paul uses this verb five times in Ephesians (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15) as a metaphor describing the “lifestyle” of the Christian ...the pattern of their behavior on an ongoing, consistent basis—the Christian lifestyle should stand out in stark contrast when compared to that of an unbeliever

4:17—“Gentiles” [*ethne*]
—the Ephesians were mostly from a Gentile (non-Jewish) background and in Ephesians he uses the term Gentile synonymously with “Pagan” or “unbeliever”; the Ephesians were no longer “Gentiles” but rather were “Christians” or “children of light”

4:17—“futility/vanity” [*mataioteti*]
—this word only used 3 times in the NT (2 Pet 2:18; Rom 8:20), but is used 39 times in the Greek of Ecclesiastes with the idea of “vanity, purposelessness, absurdity, aimlessness, emptiness and worthlessness”

4:17—“minds” [*no'os*]
—used 30 times in Greek OT, 24 in NT with many nuances; comprehension, understanding or perception; the inner man including the heart, thoughts, will and morality; a person’s complete disposition and moral resolve; not just the intellect

4:18—“being darkened”—is better translated as “having been darkened” since it is in the perfect tense-passive voice, a past completed action with ongoing continuous results; “darkness” refers to moral and spiritual wickedness as a result of sin and Satanic influence (cf. John 1:5; 3:19; Rom 1:21)

4:18—“life” [*zoe*]
—used 135 times in the NT, but this is the only time Paul uses *zoe* here in Ephesians; John uses it frequently to refer to being alive in God through a personal relationship with Christ

4:18—“ignorance”—[*agnoian, a (not)+gnosis (knowledge)*]
—this where we get our word “agnostic”

4:18—“because”—[*dia*], “on account of,” the reason they are ignorant of God is because they are hardhearted or unbelieving; it’s a willful ignorance; they are without excuse; they are accountable and culpable for their state of ignorance

4:19—“having become callous”; NIV says “having lost all sensitivity”—it’s one Greek word, *apelgekotes*, appears only once in the NT [so it’s a *hapax(once) legomenon* (spoken)]

4:19—“impurity/uncleaness” [*akatharsia, a (not) + katharsis (clean)*]; from which we get “catharsis” which means “to purge, to clean”