

THE BELIEVER IS TO WALK DIFFERENTLY FROM THE GENTILES

EPHESIANS 04: 17–24

Introduction

This passage contains an astounding truth — believers are neither Gentiles nor Jews; they are a *third race* of people. Therefore, they are not to walk like men; they are to walk like Christ.

- I. The believer is not to walk after the Gentiles, that is, after men (vv. 17-19).
- II. The believer is to walk after Christ (vv. 20-24).

I. *Ephesians 04:17–19 Believer is Not to Walk as Gentiles*

The believer is not to walk as the Gentiles, that is, as ungodly men. This is very significant. Remember: Paul is writing to Gentiles. The church at Ephesus was a Gentile church. Now note the verse. The exhortation is to “no longer live as the Gentiles do.” That is, believers are set off and set apart from Gentiles. They are no longer classified as Gentiles or Jews (cp. 1 Cor. 10:32). Who then are believers? The point being made is that they are a *third race on earth*. They are the *new creation*, the creation of a *new body* of people, a *new nation*, a *new race*. They are the children of God who are to inhabit the *new heavens and earth*. (F. F. Bruce makes this point and refers to two ancient writers who also used the phrase of a *third race*. Clement of Alexandria in his *Miscellanies* (VI. 5. 39), a second century document called the *Preaching of Peter*, and Diogenetus in his second century work, *The Epistle to Diogenetus*, chapter 1. They call Christians “a new race,” a race distinct from Jews and Greeks. *The Epistles to the Ephesians*, p. 90) (see notes, Lk. 8:21; Eph. 2:11-18; 2:14-15; 2:19-22; 4:17-19).

The point is this: believers are not to live or walk as *other men* do. Why? Because believers are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and the walk of other men does not please God. What is it that other men do that does not please God? This passage gives five traits about unbelievers that displease God. Remember: believers are to have nothing to do with any of these. They are never to return to the paths of their former life.

1. Unbelievers walk in the *futility of their thinking* (v. 7). Thinking (nous) includes the ability to will and to do the truth as well as know the truth; it includes morality as well as reasoning and understanding. The word *futility* means empty, senseless, aimless, unsuccessful, worthless.

When men push God out of their minds, their minds are void and empty of God and of His truth and morality. *God is not in their thoughts*. Their minds are ready to be filled with some other god or supremacy, that is, with the things of the world:

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|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| => worldly pleasures | => worldly religions | => worldly possessions |
| => worldly ideas | => worldly power | => worldly honour |
| => worldly position | => worldly gods | |
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Gen 6:5 *The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*

Psa 10:4 *In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.*

Psa 94:11 *The Lord knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile.*

Prov 6:16-19 *There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.*

Prov 15:26 *The Lord detests the thoughts of the wicked, but those of the pure are pleasing to him.*

Ezek 8:12 *He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, 'The Lord does not see us; the Lord has forsaken the land.'"*

The mind of man walks after these things, neglecting, ignoring and rejecting God. The believer must never return to the *walk of an empty mind*: he must never again allow his mind to become empty of God.

2. Unbelievers walk with their *understanding darkened* (v. 18). To understand means to grasp, comprehend, perceive. To be *darkened* means to be blinded and unable to see. The unbeliever does not grasp or understand God; his understanding is darkened and blinded and unable to see God. He often understands this world and the things of this world, and he gives his life over to the things of this world. But he is not able to understand God and His eternal plan for the world through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The believer is not to allow his understanding to become darkened. He is not to return to the world of the spiritually blind, the world of those who walk with darkened understanding.

Psa 82:5 *"They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken."*

Prov 2:13 *Who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways.*

Prov 4:19 *But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.*

Acts 28:27 *'For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'*

2 Cor 4:4 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

2 Tim 3:7 *Always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.*

Eph 4:18 *They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.*

3. Unbelievers walk *separated from the life of God*. Unbelievers are spiritually dead and doomed to eternal death. “Separated” (*apallotrio*) means to be estranged, cut off, detached. There are always unfriendly or hostile feelings involved in separation. The unbeliever is separated from the life of God. He is...

- estranged from God with unfriendly or hostile feelings.
- separated from God with unfriendly or hostile feelings.
- cut off from God with unfriendly or hostile feelings.
- detached from God with unfriendly or hostile feelings.

Why? Not because of God. The Bible is clear about this issue. Unbelievers are separated from God because of their own wilful ignorance and hardness of heart. Note the words “hardening” (*porosis*) and “in them.” The cause is “in them”:

⇒ They choose to be ignorant within their minds — choose to be ignorant of God.

⇒ They choose to harden their own hearts.

Unbelievers are responsible for their own death. God has provided the fountain of youth for man, the way for man to live forever. God had given His life, that is, eternal life, to man. The only way man can ever miss God’s gift of eternal life is to reject God and His gift.

Mat 15:8 *‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.’*

John 3:16-19 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”*

Acts 28:27 *‘For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’*

Eph 2:12 *Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*

1 Tim 5:6 *But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.*

Psa 58:3 *Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies.*

Jer 2:5 *This is what the Lord says: “What fault did your fathers find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves.”*

Ezek 14:5 *‘I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people of Israel, who have all deserted me for their idols.’*

4. Unbelievers are *hard and have lost all sensitivity* (apalgeo); that is, they reach a point where they no longer have feelings for God and His standard of morality. To *have lost all sensitivity* means to become callous, insensible, hardened. The more a person walks without God the more callous a person becomes to God. The more a person walks in sin, the more callous his conscience becomes to righteousness. Sin becomes more and more acceptable. The person’s conscience no longer bothers him. He reaches a point of *losing all sensitivity*. The believer is not to return to sin. He is not to walk as other men walk — in sin, becoming callous and insensitive to God.

Acts 28:27 *‘For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’*

Eph 4:19 *Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

1 Tim 4:2 *Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*

Heb 5:11 *We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.*

5. Unbelievers give themselves over to *sensuality*, to all forms of sensual living (see *Sensuality*, Gal. 5:19-21).
6. Unbelievers indulge in every kind of impurity, lusting for more and more. The word *impurity* (akatharsias) means to be dirty and filthy; to be infested with every kind of unclean, immoral, dirty and polluted behaviour. It is the most immoral behaviour imaginable. It is unbridled lust turned loose.

Mat 5:28 *“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

Rom 6:19 *I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.*

Eph 5:3 *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.*

1 Th 4:7 *For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.*

Heb 13:4 *Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*

7. The words *lust* or *greed* (pleonexia) mean avarice, coveting, craving, grasping, desiring to have more and more; hoarding all one can get and still craving more. It is being enslaved and held in bondage by the things of this earth: for example, food, drink and a host of fleshly sins and self-centred behaviour.

Believers are not to walk in such a life. They are not to walk as other men walk.

Exo 20:17 “*You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.*”

Jer 6:13 “*From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit.*”

Ezek 33:31 *My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain.*

Micah 2:2 *They covet fields and seize them, and houses and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellow man of his inheritance.*

Hab 2:9 “*Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain to set his nest on high, to escape the clutches of ruin!*”

Luke 12:15 *Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”*

Col 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

II. ***Ephesians 04:20–24 Believer is to Walk in Christ***

The believer is to *walk in Christ*. He is not to walk as men walk. The reason is clearly stated: believers did not learn such a sinful life from Christ. Christ did not live a sinful a life, and He has not taught us to live a sinful life as other men live. If a man has heard Christ and been taught by Christ, then he has heard and been taught *the truth*. Note that the Teacher is Christ Himself, not the minister. By the Holy Spirit. Christ uses the body and voice of the minister to teach people how they are to live. If a person has really heard Christ speaking to their hearts, then what they heard was not the kind of life lived by unbelievers. The true walk is a walk in Christ, and a walk in Christ involves three actions.

1. The believer is to *put off the old person, the old self* (see *Old Person, Old Self*, Eph. 4:22).
2. *The believer is to be renewed in the spirit of his mind, made new in the attitude of his mind* (see *Renewed Mind*, Eph. 4:23).
3. The believer is to *put on the new person, the new self* (see *New Person or Self*, Eph. 4:24). ■

EPHESIANS 04:22 OLD PERSON, OLD SELF, OLD MAN

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires. Ephesians 04:22

The “old person, the old self” refers to what a man is *before he accepts Christ*. It is the very *nature of man, the natural*, corruptible seed which is passed on from generation to generation and leads to death. It is what is called the nature of Adam. (See *Natural Man*, 1 Cor. 2:14.)

Three things are taught about the old person, the old self in the Scriptures.

1. The believer’s *old person or self* has already been put to death. It was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). When the believer received Christ, God began immediately to count him buried with Christ and united with Christ in the very likeness of His death. This is the meaning symbolized in baptism.
2. The deeds of the old person, or self have been *taken off* from the believer (Col. 3:9). The power of evil deeds has been broken and the believer is no longer in bondage to them.
3. In this passage, the believer himself is exhorted to *put off the old person or self*. He is told to exercise his own will in putting off the *old man*. He so wills by realizing and acting upon three truths.
 - a. The old person or self, from God’s perspective, is counted dead. Therefore, the believer *counts* his old man as already being dead.

Rom 6:11 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

- b. The old person or self is recognized as being very much alive. The old man is tempted to *look, taste, feel, think* — to *experience sin*. But the believer rejects the temptation. He refuses to participate in sin. He puts off the old man as he walks day by day.

Rom 6:12-13 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

- c. The old man (including all creation) is seen aging and dying day by day. The believer realizes that this world and all that is within it, including his old man, is in a constant process of dying. He knows that all is dying because the evil desires of nature are deceitful, and deceit disturbs and destroys relationships — the very nature of things (Eph. 4:22). Such destruction deteriorates and corrupts; it eats

away at life and at the balance of things until all things become nothing but decayed matter. Therefore the believer puts off the old man and puts on the new man — by faith in the love of God. When a person believes in the love of God, God responds by loving him so much that He makes a permanent man out of him, a new man who is to live eternally and become a citizen of the new heavens and earth.

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

Eph 4:22 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.*

Col 3:9 *Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.*

1 Pet 4:3 *For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do — living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.*

2 Pet 1:9 *But if anyone does not have them, he is near-sighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. □*

EPHESIANS 04:23 RENEWED MIND

*To be made new in the attitude of your minds: **Ephesians 04:23***

The believer's mind is to be *renewed* or *made new* (ananeousthai), which means to be, readjusted, changed, turned around and regenerated.

a. The mind of man has been affected by sin. It desperately needs to be renewed. The mind is far from perfect. It is *basically worldly*, that is...

- selfish
- self-centred
- self-seeking
- centred on this world
- centred on the flesh
- centred on this life

Scripture is clear about the corruption of man's mind. The human mind has just been tragically corrupted by man's selfishness and sin. Man's mind...

- has become vain, empty and futile in its *thinking*.

Rom 1:21 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

- has become *depraved*.

Rom 1:28 *Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.*

- has become sinful and hostile to God.

Rom 8:7 *The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.*

- has become blinded by Satan so that it cannot see the light of the gospel.

2 Cor 4:4 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

- has become of vanity, futility, emptiness.

Eph 4:17 *So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.*

- has become focused upon earthly things.

Phil 3:18-19 *For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.*

- has become alienated from God and an enemy to God.

Col 1:21 *Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour.*

- has become unspiritual

Col 2:18 *Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.*

- has become corrupted.

Titus 1:15 *To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.*

- b. The mind is renewed or made new by the presence of Christ in the life of the believer. When a person receives the Lord Jesus Christ as His Lord, the person is *spiritually...*

- born again (Jn. 3:3-8; 1 Pet. 1:23).
- Made into a new person or self (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).
- Made into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).
- given the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16; see vv. 9-15).

What this means is a most wonderful truth, and it is easily seen. When a person receives Jesus Christ into his life, he receives the mind of Christ as well. Christ places His mind into the believer's mind; that is, Christ changes the believer's

mind to focus upon God. Whereas the believer's mind used to be centred upon the world, it is now centred upon spiritual matters. The believer's mind is renewed, changed, turned around and regenerated to focus upon God. However, it is critical to remember that only Christ can renew the human mind. Only Christ can implant, *the mind of Christ* within a person. Only Christ can give a person His thoughts and the spirit to *live out* His thoughts.

- c. The believer is to live a transformed life; that is, he is to walk day-by-day *renewing his mind more and more*. He is to allow the Spirit of Christ (the Holy Spirit) to focus his mind more and more upon God and spiritual things.

=> The believer is to love the Lord with all his mind.

Mat 22:37 *Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."*

=> The believer is to keep his mind upon spiritual things, not carnal or sinful things.

Rom 8:5-6 *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

=> The believer is to demolish arguments, cast down imaginations and every thought that interrupts his knowledge of God and to captivate every thought for Christ.

2 Cor 10:3-5 *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

=> The believer is not to let his mind be led astray.

2 Cor 11:3 *But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

=> The believer is not to fulfil the desires of the sinful nature.

Eph 2:3 *All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

=> The believer is not to walk as the world walks, in the futility of their thinking.

Eph 4:17 *So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.*

=> The believer is to be made new in the attitude of his mind.

Eph 4:23 *To be made new in the attitude of your minds.*

=> The believer is to have the same attitude as Christ by walking humbly before God and men.

Phil 2:5 *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

=> The believer is to think only upon the things of praise and excellence.

Phil 4:8 *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.*

=> The believer is to live by the laws of God which God has put into his mind.

Heb 8:10 *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

=> The believer is to arm himself with the same attitude as Christ in bearing suffering.

1 Pet 4:1 *Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. □*

EPHESIANS 04: 24 NEW PERSON OR SELF

And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 04:24

A man *regenerated, renewed, born again* who has become spiritual minded. It is a *new person or self* created by Christ; he has been given a holy nature and an incorruptible life. It is opposed to the old *person or self* with a corrupt nature. It is a man who is...

- in fellowship with God
- obedient to God's will
- devoted to God's service

There are two Greek words translated by the English word new. There is the word neos which refers to something new that has just been made, but there are already many others existing just like it. There is the word kainos which refers to something new, something just made and there is nothing like it in existence. Kainos is the word used here. Jesus Christ makes a *new man* entirely — a creation unlike any other creation existing. The Gentile believer is not made into a Jew; neither is a Jewish believer made into a Gentile. Each, through the Lord Jesus Christ, is made into a *new kind of person — a new person or self in God*. Every person *can begin life all over again*; every person can have a new beginning, a new life by coming to Jesus Christ.

How is this possible? By the power of God. When a person believes in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ — really believes and entrusts his life into the hands of Jesus Christ — God creates the spirit of the person in righteousness and true holiness. God takes the faith of the person and *credits it as the righteousness of Jesus Christ*. God actually credits the person's faith *as the perfect righteousness and holiness of Jesus Christ*. Therefore, the person stands before God in the righteousness and holiness of Jesus Christ. But note: this is not all that God does. He does more marvellous things for the believer — all having to do with creating the believer into a new person.

1. God quickens or makes the spirit of the believer alive. Whereas the believer's spirit was dead to God, God creates it and makes it alive to God.
2. God causes the believer to be born again spiritually.
3. God actually places His divine nature into the heart of the believer.
4. God actually creates a new person or self out of the believer.
5. God renews the believer by the Holy Spirit. ■