

## Has the World Lost Its Mind?

Ephesians 4:17-19

July 26, 2020, Pastor Jeremy Cagle

Well hello everyone. Good morning. Welcome to Grace Fellowship Church. It is good to see you here today on this beautiful Sunday. This is the last Sunday in July, if you can believe that; it sounds kind of wild. The year is going by very fast, but that's where we're at in the calendar. This is the last Sunday in July. We're halfway through the year, and I was talking with someone recently who said that it's good to be back in church again because they felt like they haven't been here all year. You know, here we are in July and they had some things come up in their life. They weren't able to be here before the pandemic hit, and now it feels like they haven't been all year long. That brings up a good point, and the point is that we need to remember times like this as a church. We need to remember times and trials like this as a Christian because life is so hectic. It's so busy that we often forget stuff like this comes and goes and we don't remember the Coronavirus. We don't remember the pandemic, but we want to remember these things because the Lord has been faithful; and He's brought us through it, amen? We want to remember this kind of stuff because we want to remember Him, and that's why it's important.

It's been said that the bumps are what you build on as a church. The trials are what shape you, and so we want to remember the trials that we face. Oftentimes we want to forget them because they're painful. I don't think any of us are going to want to remember all the crazy stuff that's been going on right now, but it's good to remember that because the Lord brought us through it. I also want to say before we begin the sermon that even though this has been a hard time, it's allowed us to get through some things as a church we wouldn't normally get to do. It's allowed us to work on some projects we wouldn't normally be able to work on and one is our distinctives.

We're using this time to write some distinctives for our church. If you're a member or if you're in the directory, you'll notice these things come in the mail once a month, and they don't come down from on high. We work on them as an office. We create them and send them out to you, but according to our website, the distinctive page says that a distinctive is defined as a characteristic that distinguishes one organization from another. It helps clarify who you are and what you're about. With more than 50 different churches in Chilliwack, we thought it would help to tell you what sets us apart. And with that in mind, here are some pamphlets that do that. And here's the ones that are on the website right now if you go look it up. We have one on expository preaching, biblical counseling, elders and deacons, eternal security, biblical manhood and womanhood, and the sovereignty of God. And I might add, there's going to be more to follow that's not all that's in the list. So, kind of keep an eye out. We're going to have ones on believer's baptism, church discipline, cessationism and topics such as that. But we're doing this so if someone asks, "What is Grace Fellowship Chilliwack about? What does your church believe on one of these topics?" You can hand this to them and show them. This would be available for you to let them know about our church. There are a lot of churches in our town, right? And there are

a lot of people that are looking for churches. So, we want to make it very easy for them to find us. We want to have big bright lights flashing who we are and what we teach, and so this is one way we're doing that. If you would like to see those distinctives, they are on our website; we have a whole page devoted to them. And we'll also be sending them out to you in the mail in the weeks to come. And with that said, speaking of distinctives and what we are as a church, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to a book that talks about that.

I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. That is what we're in this morning, if you would, please turn to the book of Ephesians and we are in chapter four. Which I do want to read to you; we read it during the service, but I want to do it just for the recording. If you look in verse 17 of Ephesians chapter four, Paul writes this,

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. BE ANGRY AND YET DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labour, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Now, that is a mouthful to read there. That's a very rich portion of Scripture. But just to say a few words about it, if you notice, Paul starts off this section in verse 17 with the phrase "so I say" or "now this, I say" in some of your translations, which is unusual. It's a little bit odd of a phrase because it's the only time he uses this in the book. It's the only time he uses that expression, but

he does it to say that this is the point of all this; this is what the book of Ephesians is about. You could look at this as his mission statement. "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer as the Gentiles walk." That's the message of the book of Ephesians. That's what this book is about: that you walk no longer as the Gentiles do.

If you've been going with us through the book of Ephesians on Sunday mornings, you'll know that we've talked about a lot of things in here already. We've studied a lot of things. Subjects like salvation and our being made alive in Christ, talked about that earlier. We've talking about blessings and how Jesus has blessed you with every spiritual blessing. We've talked about the subject of prayer and how Jesus can do more than we ask or think or imagine, talking about the church and how God gave gifts to it, and leaders, apostles and prophets and so forth.

But now Paul says, "This is why I told you all this. This is why I gave you that information, so you would walk no longer as the Gentiles walk." Which means I did this so you would no longer live like them. The word "Gentile," it's a common word in the Bible. You see it a lot, but it means someone outside the nation of Israel, someone who is not Jewish. It was a racial term; it separated one race from another, but here Paul uses it to separate religions, to separate a believer from an unbeliever. And Paul says, "I wrote this book so you will stop acting like unbelievers today. I wrote this book so you will act like your saved." You need to act like all this stuff in Ephesians 1-3 has actually happened in your life. The way he says this is interesting here, it's very important, because he relates it to the mind. In other words, the greatest way to do this is in your mind. If you notice a couple of expressions here, verse 17, mentions the word "mind," so you see the word actually in there, the word mind. Verse 18 mentions the understanding which is the Greek word *dianoia* which refers to your intelligence or your ability to think. It also mentions being ignorant, which is the opposite of that; being ignorant is the failure to think. It mentions the heart because the heart and mind go together. But what Paul says here is this is what needs to change in you as a Christian. This is where you need to live the Christian life. You do it in your mind. You do it in your head. They say that a mind is a terrible thing to waste and it's even worse for a Christian. A Christian should never waste his mind.

You know, some people think the first thing you need to change when you become a Christian is your clothes. They get saved and they go into their wardrobe and get rid of everything and replace it all with suits and dresses and things like that. Some people think the first thing you need to change when you're a Christian is your diet. You stop eating this food, stop eating that food, stop drinking this, stop drinking that. Some people think you need to change other things. Paul says, here's what you need to change. You need to change your mind.

You need to change the way you think, which is a scary thing to think about. It's frightening because the way some people act, they never think, right? The way some people behave, they never use their minds because they like the TV or the internet, do it for them. Or they go to

church and they let the pastor do it for them. You ask them what they believe, "Well I believe what pastor so and so believes." Or "I believe what this celebrity believes or that Christian celebrity believes." Paul says you shouldn't be that way. As a Christian, you shouldn't act that way; you need to think for yourself. This is a personal thing that we read here. To say another way, this is important, you don't want to miss this; but the greatest problem you have as a Christian is inside of you. It's not outside of you. The greatest problem you have is between your two ears. It's not out there. So that's where you have to grow, that's where you have to change.

The reason teaching is so important to us as a church is because we're continually emphasizing this as a ministry. If you hear people talk right now, a lot of folks are asking the question, "What's wrong with the world today? Why is it so messed up?" And there's lots of opinions about that. A specialist will tell you it's because of the environment. I mean, the world is messed up because of global warming. Or the world is messed up because something like that. A psychologist will tell you it's because of someone else. The world is messed up because it's the school's fault or the community's fault. The world is messed up because it's the parent's fault and the mother's fault, the dad's fault. Bible doesn't say that. The Bible says the world is messed up because we're messed up. The Bible says the world is so bad because we're so bad. The problem is in *here*, and that's what you need to change. You know, if you think about it, God put Adam and Eve in paradise; and what did they do? They sinned, right? He put them in a perfect environment, there has never been a better world than the Garden of Eden, and they blew it. They chose to follow the devil rather than God; and that's the same problem with every human being on the planet. It's the same problem with every person who's ever lived.

I think a passage like this one is so important, because the world seems especially bad at this moment. Amen? Everybody know what I'm talking about? This world seems especially messed up right now. I read somewhere that every day you look outside your door to see what chapter The Book of Revelation we're in. It's like you trying to figure out what plague we're facing next. Someone else said 2020, it's kind of like looking both ways to cross the street and getting hit by jet airplane. I mean first it was the Coronavirus and all the panic and concern that went with that. Then we had the riots in the States and the protests and all those things. And now it's back to the virus again. And it's so confusing because one person says one thing and one person says another. One expert says this is how it is, the next day another one contradicts him; so you don't know who to believe. You don't know who to trust. And Bible says there is a solution to that problem. There is a reason why men act the way they do. And it says the world is so bad because the people are so bad. It's a problem of the heart. It's a problem of the mind. And we know what to do with that. If you look in verse 20, skipping ahead a little bit to give you some hope here before we dive into this passage, verse 20, says, "But you did not learn Christ in this way." That means Christ as the answer to all this; Christ is the answer to the problem, and you as a Christian should know that. When the world goes crazy, you don't need to follow them. When the world goes mad, you don't have to jump on the bandwagon. We all have a sin problem, but as a

Christian, you have a sin solution, and that is found in the person of Jesus Christ. And you need to remember that, remember what Christ has done for you. And you need to think differently from the world.

The greatest difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is internal. It's not external. You can't go through the world and look around and see that all the Christians wear the same type of clothes, eat the same type of foods, or drive the same type of car because it's on the inside. The change in us is in our mind. The Bible has a lot to say about this by the way, it says a lot about the change that has occurred in us when we were saved. A couple passages on this.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away and behold, new things have come." And the word "new" there means brand new, entirely new because that's what you are in Christ. And with that, you get a new mind. You are different because your mind is different now.

1 Peter 1:23 says, "For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." And now Peter says, "This is what's changed you. This is what's made you different: you were born through the Word of God. You were born through the Bible, and so you need to fill your mind with that.

Ephesians 2, which we learned several months ago, says "You were dead in your trespasses and sins. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, made us alive together with Christ." and now all this is yours now. And you need to live that way.

John Owen, the Puritan, said it like this. "Temptation puts nothing into a man, it only draws out what was in there before." And Paul says in this passage that you need to see that; you need to be aware of what temptation does, so you can defeat it. And that's what we're going to talk about today, so if you're taking notes, in Ephesians 4, we're going to look at three areas where you need to resist the world. That's our outline for today. That's what we're going to talk about. If you're taking notes in Ephesians, 4:17 here are three areas where you need to resist the world.

Because let's be honest, this is a struggle today, isn't it? I mean, this is a battle. I mean, is there anybody in this room that doesn't leave church and go out and just get barraged by the world, right? I mean, even if even if you go home, you've still got your cell phone, right? You still got all the junk on social media right there in your pocket. Can't get away from it, the world still tempts you. And the reason it still tempts you is because it's still in here somewhere, and you need to get it out. The reason it still tempts you is because it's still on your mind, and what Paul says here is that's got to change. You're saved. You are born again. You're a new creature in Christ, and you have to put off the old man; and you do it by identifying the things that tempt you, which we're going to talk about.

Looking at three areas where you need to resist the world, the first one is in the futility of the mind. The first area where you need to resist the world is in the futility of the mind, which means you need to resist its vanity. You need to resist its foolishness because the world has nothing for you. And you need to see that the world has nothing you should want as a Christian, and you need to believe that. The reason those things tempt us is because we think they give us something that we don't already have; and they don't. It's futile. If you look in verse 17, this is what Paul says.

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind.

Just some background here as you read this, you can tell that Paul is saying something serious here. He's saying something important because, like we just said, he uses this phrase, "I affirm something together with the Lord." That's kind of his way of telling you to pause for a moment and let this sink in. Just step back for a minute, take a breath, and ponder what I'm about to say is what Paul is doing here. And he says, "You should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk."

We said a little bit about the Gentiles, but we need to talk about it some more, because it's a word we don't really use today. I think we have people from all kinds of different walks of life, but I don't think any of you if I said, "Where are you from?" You would say, "Well, I'm a Gentile." It's just not the way we talk. It's an unusual word. But the Gentile or the non-Jewish world in Paul's day was a bad place. It was it was pretty ugly.

As we've gone through different books together on Sunday mornings, I've talked to you some about the culture but every culture you look at no matter where it's been, Rome, Crete. It was all bad. And it stood out in stark contrast from the Jews. That's why this word is important; the two cultures couldn't have been any more different. In fact, one reason the Jews hated the Gentiles so much was for this reason because they were so wicked. They were so evil. They call them in Hebrew *goyim* or dogs because they acted like that. Jews said, "You look like a dog, you smell like a dog, you act like a dog; I will call you dogs." And to highlight this you know Ephesus, the town of Ephesus, where this letter was written, it was located on the banks of the Aegean Sea in the Roman province of Asia Minor, and it was right across the water from Macedonia where Alexander the Great was from. At the time of this writing, Alexander the Great lived about a century or two before this, and so, his birthplace was still very popular. There was still a lot of traffic on that ocean making Ephesus a very popular place. It had a lot of visitors. A lot of people came through. It was a coastal town, and so sailors and merchants would pass through there to party and have a good time.

You can add to this that a major Roman temple was located there, the temple of Diana. It was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, a massive temple, it took 220 years to finish the construction of it. And it was devoted to one thing and one thing only or one main thing above all others, and that was sex. Diana was the goddess of fertility. She had other specialties as well. She was the goddess of hunting, she was the goddess of other things; but childbearing was the main thing and with that, all the worship and rituals and ceremonies of the temple were tied into fornication, making it a bad place. You know, we sometimes will complain because churches around us are bad, but we've never seen anything like this. This was a religious place that was nothing more than a glorified brothel. It had a major impact on the town. I mean, everybody in Ephesus was impacted by this. In fact, one ancient scholar said the Ephesians were fit to be drowned he said. That's the only thing you could really do with these people is you kill them. They're horrible he said. Another said this was the most lascivious city in the ancient world, which is saying something. He means it was worse than Corinth, it was worse than Rome, it was worse than Crete. So the Ephesians were apparently bad by even Gentile standards. I mean, even the Romans despise these people.

And what Paul says here, this is why that background's important, what Paul says in verse 17 is that you have been saved out of that. You have been delivered from that way of life and you need to act like it now. You need to remember that. He says you are no longer to walk as the Gentiles walk in the futility of the mind. You can imagine all the mental trash that would be in your mind as an Ephesian. All the garbage you've had from decades of living like that. You talk to people come to faith in Christ in a city like Los Angeles or Vancouver. What would they tell you? They will tell you "My mind is so full of darkness."

Paul says it's full of futility here. The word futility is *mataiotēti* in Greek; it means void of substance or empty areas, the idea is. You guys remember Ecclesiastes 1:2, Solomon uses the Hebrew version of this word to say "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity." I heard one scholar say, "You could translate that soap bubbles, soap bubbles, it's all just soap bubbles." It just rises up and pops and gone. Floats up in the air and just fizzles away. That's this word means because this is what sin does. This is what the world does. It just fizzles. It's fun for a minute and then it's over. It's a blast for a weekend or kind of a quick trip to Ephesus, and then it's done, and you got to go back to the real world. One pastor says sin is like a roller coaster. You wait for three hours for a two-minute ride. And Paul says you have to stop thinking like that. You have to get away from that type of mentality and change your mind. All of that stuff, all the partying, all the sex, all the vice. It's just futile. Wasted.

Friends let's be honest as you drive around Chilliwack and British Columbia, and the Lower Mainland, you see all the money, and vice, and sin, that's flowing in here. You have to say we're not that different from Ephesus. We were a little cleaner, we clean up a little bit more, we try to hide it a little better. We put it on that side of town or that side of town, but it's still there because

the inside is still the same. The heart is still the same because people do futile things here, right? They do vain things here. For example, a lot of money coming into this area right now. And what do people do with it? Well, they buy cars, right? They buy a new vehicle and when they get that, what do they do then? They buy another one. What do they do after that? They buy another one. And what do they do after that? They buy another one, one with more gadgets and gizmos and fancy stuff, right? It's a cycle that never ends and never stops. Or they buy a boat and then they buy another one. They buy a house and they buy another one because it's got to be in this neighborhood or that neighborhood. It has to be in a place where you pay all the fancy fees and stuff. They buy new clothes, get an RV, they get a cat or a dog, and if that doesn't satisfy, they take it to another level, and they get a new husband or they get a new wife. Because the old one is not as attractive anymore. The old one is not appealing. And what Paul says here is that a horrible cycle of futility has to stop for you as a Christian. It has to end. You got to get off the wagon. You got to get off the Ferris wheel; it amounts to nothing. It's like a bunch of soap bubbles that rise up and pop.

I've talked to people that have come to the end of their lives and said "I've wasted it. I don't remember the last 50 years. It's all been for nothing." I've talked to other people that come to the end of their lives and they will tell you "I would rather commit suicide than ponder eternal things. I would rather just die or be drugged out." It's so depressing to them.

In his book, *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* Leo Tolstoy tells a story of a poor farmer, who was told that for 1000 rubies he could have all the land he wanted if he could walk to it in one day. It would all be his if he could walk to it and come home by sundown. So, early the next morning, he started to walk, and he kept walking throughout the day, and he kept going faster and faster, until finally he made it back home right before sundown and collapsed. He made it ride home, right to his doorstep before the sun went down and fell over dead from exhaustion. And Tolstoy's point is that it will do you no good if it kills you. All the land in the world is worthless if you die in the process.

That's what Paul says here. You need to trust in something better than this to satisfy you. You need to trust in greater than that, you need to trust in Christ. This and leads to another point to talk about this morning. In a second area where we need to resist the world. So, the first one is in the futility of the mind, which means you need to resist its vanity. You need to resist the foolish ways of the world because it has nothing for you. It's only soap bubbles.

Which leads to another point to consider. A second area where we need to resist the world, and that is in its dark understanding. A second area where you need to resist the world as in its dark understanding, which refers to its ignorance. You need to resist the world and its ignorance and blindness towards God. If you read on in verse 17, Paul writes, and he says,

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them.

As Paul goes on in this passage, you can tell there's a progression of thought here. He's working his way up to something because first he says that the world is futile and its mind is futile and now, he says it's dark. See the progression there? First, he says it's vain or foolish, and now he says it's excluded from the life of God, which is a whole nother level to this. This is a whole nother place because if you think about it, your mind is the noblest part of you. It's the greatest thing you have as a human being. And the only thing that sets you above the animals is your mind. You're not stronger than them. You're not faster than them. You're smarter. And for that part of you to be shut out from the life of God is frightening. It's devastating.

And Paul says that's where the world is at today. That's where the lost world is. It's shut out on every level. He says God did this because of the ignorance that is in them. Well, even before that, you see this phrase "being darkened in their understanding." You know, if something is in the dark, you can't see, right? If your eyes are dark, you can't see what's in front of you, the world can't do that. And he also says that God did this, He shut them out because of the ignorance that is in them. You see that the ignorance is not outside of them. It's in them. The problem is internal. It's in here, it's not out there.

That word, "ignorant" it's a helpful word. It's the word *agnoian*, from which we get the word agnostic. It literally means to know nothing. It refers to someone who has no knowledge of God whatsoever. They don't have a clue. The Latin version of this word is the word *ignoramus*. It's always ironic to hear an agnostic lecture about the person of God because by their own title, they're saying they know nothing about the subject. They're standing up and saying, "I'm an ignoramus. Listen to me talk for 45 minutes." That's this word. That's what the world is at. You could even say the world's probably even agnostic maybe even more than it's atheist because it just doesn't even want to think about God. And we might add, and this is Paul's point here, this has made the world crazy. This has made the world nuts because it has literally lost its mind.

People ask me all the time "Has the world lost its mind?" The answer is yes. Yes. You see it every day. Just watch the five o'clock news and you see it. Go on Facebook and you see it. It's everywhere. You know, for example, we have young people today who think they can change the world. They think they can fix it, but they can't even decide what gender they are. I'm not saying that as a joke. I'm very serious. They can't even decide if they're a man or a woman, and they want to tell us they know how to fix the world. That's madness. That's insanity.

We have politicians and government leaders who do much the same thing. They think they can change the world, but they can't even decide what an essential service is for the country. They can't even decide which one to open first, a church or a liquor store? And I'm not saying these things sarcastically; I'm saying these things because we wrestle with this. And when we battle with this, and we wonder why is it this way? This is why it's this way. The answer's found right here. There's no mystery. "Being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, they act this way." They act lost because they are lost. They act blind because they are blind. What else do you want them to do? These terms here Paul uses, he says they are dark, excluded, ignorant. Later on, he'll call them hard and callous. I mean, this is just bad, the bad, the bad; lost, lost, lost.

And putting this all together, if you tie this into what he's going to say next week, the only thing that can help them is Jesus Christ. The only thing that can help the world is the Savior. There's nothing else that can do it. Schools can't do it. We are one of the most educated societies in human history and we act like this. Government can't do it. Experts can't do it. I heard somewhere that you know, when the Coronavirus was going on, everybody was a medical expert. And then when the race riots happened in the States, everybody was a sociological expert. And now we're all medical experts again. We got experts everywhere. It's not helping. The only thing that can save you is Jesus Christ.

In John 9:39 the Lord Jesus himself said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see." Jesus said, "That's why I've come; that's why I'm here. To help you see God, to remove the darkness from your eyes.

In John 8:12 He said, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." And that phrase "Light of the world" is beautiful because it means this is the light that everyone can see. This is the light that anybody in the world can hold on to and be saved. That means this is the light that our young people can hold on to, and this is the light that the politicians can hold on to. This is the light that people from the LGBTQ community can look to and be saved, and this is the light that our government leaders can see and be saved. This is a light for everyone. And I don't know if everyone in the church understands this today. I don't know if we always get this because I can't tell you how many times I've seen Christians shout at people over these things, right? I've seen Christians get so angry with people over the LGBT stuff and the essential services debate. I'm not saying there's not a time to talk about it. Of course there is and there's a time to probably debate. But friends, at the end of the day, all the shouting in the world won't help them if they're blind. All the anger in the world is not going to solve the problem because they can't see. You can't yell them into the kingdom of God. You can't bully them in there. You need to tell them about Jesus Christ. That's what someone did for you, isn't it? That's how you were saved. That's how you could see. Someone told you about the Savior, and we have to do the same thing for them.

It leads to one more point to consider for this morning. It's a pretty applicable passage, right? I mean, this is real life stuff here. The world hasn't changed that much in 2000 years. At least one more area to look at where we need to resist the world just to review these other ones that the first area is the futility of the mind. Which means you need to resist the world's vanity; you need to resist its foolish way of thinking. The world is going down a slippery slope and you don't want to go down there with them. And second, you need to resist its darkened understanding which means you need to resist its ignorance and spiritual blindness, and you need to resist the impulse or the desire to lash out at that. Don't get caught up in the madness.

It leads to a final point to consider this morning, just one more area where you need to resist the world. And that's in the hardness of its heart. The final area where you need to resist the world is in the hardness of its heart which means you need to resist its callousness or its lack of feeling. The reason the world is the way it is, is because it doesn't feel anything for God. It's lost all sensation, affection, emotion, worship. You don't want to go down that way either. If you look, just reading the whole passage here, Paul writes, and he says,

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

I've already pointed out to you that as you go through this passage here, things just go from bad to worse. In other words, as you read this, it goes from dark to even darker. Things are going to get better in verse 20, but so far, it's about as ugly as it can be. Because they started off futile; the world starts off dark and now it's callous. It starts off ignorant and blind and all that stuff and now it can't feel anything at all. You guys know what a callus is, right? You work hard in the yard and develop a callus. What that callus means is that I can't feel anything right there anymore. The world has done that with God.

And the word "hardening" here it's a medical term that refers to hardness that forms after a bone has been healed. It's the toughness that sets in after surgery. Any doctor will tell you that after a bone goes through that it is harder than what it was before. It's tougher than what it was before; it gets as hard as a brick. Paul says the world has been that way with its sin. It's rejected God to the point that it is as tough as a brick right now; it's lost all sense of sensation.

You guys know what this is like even as Christians, even as believers, you sin once and what happens? You feel guilty right? You feel bad. Sin again, what happens? You don't feel so bad

anymore, do you? Sin a third time, what happens? It's even less. Four times even less. What's going on in your heart, it's getting hard and just getting used to the sin. The world is used to sin. That's all it knows. And Paul says if you don't watch it as a Christian, if you don't wake up and pay attention, you could be in the same place. You can get to the point where you sin, and you don't feel anything anymore.

One commentator said this is what sin does to the heart. This is what temptation does. It has a paralyzing effect upon it. It has a deadening effect. Now if you're saved, obviously the Holy Spirit will kick in and stop all this; but Paul's point is you're on dangerous ground if you keep sending. Verse 19 says

And they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

That phrase giving themselves over to sensuality, it's another way of saying giving themselves over to lust or sexual sin. And Paul singles that one out here because it has a particularly powerful effect on a person. Lust has a particularly powerful effect on a man or woman. It makes them greedy because they can never have enough. That word greedy is in here. You're never satisfied. This is what Paul is driving out here at the end of the day, this is what it comes down to. You're never satisfied with sin. Never. You can never have enough of it, so you have to resist it at the beginning. I don't know if you've ever talked to someone who struggles with sexual sin, to someone who struggles with pornography or something like that. But if you do, they'll tell you it all started with a little glance at a computer screen. That's where it started. It all started with one little compromise and before they knew it, this thing had taken over their entire life. If you know someone who's committed a horrible sin in this department, if they've done something terrible, like have an affair or something like that, they'll tell you the same thing. They didn't start off planning to do that. They didn't start off thinking they were going to go that far, but one little sin led to another little sin, led to another little sin until it was out of control.

John Bunyan says one leak will sink a ship. One sin will sink a sinner. You see that here? Start off with a futile mind, you'll end up giving yourselves over to lust. Start off with a few empty thoughts, continue down that path; and before you know it, your life will be over. So, we have to learn a lesson from that today which leads me to ask the question, are you doing this today? Are you learning a lesson from a passage like this? As you read this text, as you read this passage, does it make you wake up and pay attention? That's why Paul wrote it. That's why it's in here.

You know, do you find yourself thinking futile thoughts? Do you find yourself thinking silly things? Is your mind always on the next new car, or new house, or new RV? Are you constantly thinking about the next purchase or the next toy the next thing? Or even worse, are you thinking about the next husband or next wife? Because if you are Paul says you got to stop it now because

if you don't stop it now, you're gonna act on it. If you don't stop it now you will become hardened. To put that another way you know what are you filling your mind with today? What thoughts are you filling your head with? You know they say garbage in, garbage out, right? Junk in, junk out. Are you filling your mind full of worldly things or are you filling it full of the Word of God?

And I want to give you some hope today if this is a convicting passage for you. You know, if you read this and say, "This is me, I am here I'm somewhere between verse 17 and verse 19. I'm going down that road." Can I give you some hope? Something to build you up. Verse 20, says if you're a Christian, verse 20 says "You did not learn Christ in this way." And if you notice the way he says this here, it's actually encouraging to you. Paul says, you've already learned Christ. If you're a believer, you've already been saved. You just need to go back to that now. You need to go back to the foundation. Learn Christ. Jesus didn't teach you to sin. He taught you to get victory over that. Jesus didn't teach you to fail. He taught you to triumph over all of these things, and you can do that today if you come back to him.

You know, as I was preparing for the sermon this week, I came across a testimony of a man named Mel Trotter, who you might not have heard of before. He was a preacher from the 1900s before he became a preacher. He was an alcoholic, and I mean he was a real alcoholic. He was consumed with alcohol to the point that his children were starving. They didn't have enough to eat because he spent all his money on booze. He got so bad that his youngest daughter died of non-nutrition; she starved to death and afterwards, the neighbors raised enough money to buy a dress for her to be buried in. They raised enough money to get her a burial gown, and he stole it. He broke into the funeral home, opened the casket, took the dress off his daughter and went and sold it for more alcohol. And that went on for years. It went on for decades until someone told him about Jesus. Someone told him that there's a saviour for sinners who can forgive them for anything they've done, and Mel Trotter believed, and he was changed. He said from that moment on, he never touched a drop of alcohol again.

I tell you that story because if Jesus can save a man like that, He can save you this morning. Amen? I mean, if He can change someone that bad, that far off, He can change you today. If you see yourself in this passage, I want to encourage you don't stop at verse 17. Don't stop at verse 18. Don't stop at verse 19. Read all the way to verse 20 because if you're in Christ, that's where you belong. And if you're not in Christ, that's where you can be this morning. If you're lost; if you don't believe all this, you can believe the first time today and find yourself here and have victory over this. If you would just believe. Can I pray for you to do that this morning? This is the hope for the world, isn't it? This is the hope for any sinner. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we close our sermon today, our hearts are heavy. At least, my heart is heavy because we see this in the world around us. These are not theoretical things this morning. This is

not impractical. This is very practical. Our world is in this passage; 21<sup>st</sup> century Canada is right here, and yet there's hope in the midst of that. There is light in the darkness and it's our job to go out and preach it. Father, we pray that You would help us to do so.

Lord, thank You for those who are here this morning who have been saved out of darkness. Thank You for those this morning who have been saved from a futile, hard mind. And I pray as they go out, they would be encouraged to pour the scriptures into their mind to think about You more and more. I also pray for any who are here today who are lost and don't know the Savior. Lord I pray for them because they don't have to believe that way. They don't have to go out the same way they came in. They can trust in Him and be saved today.

Father, thank You for passages like this one. Thank You for Scriptures like this one, to remind us there is Light for a fallen world. And we pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen.