

WE LEARN CHRIST ON THE NARROW WAY



THE SCHOOL OF JESUS

101 EAST NARROW WAY

1. We are to be done with the life that is not truly life at all, 4:17-19.

- (Ephesians 4:17–19 ESV) Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

A. It is a life that is devised and desired in the futility of a person's mind.

Futility ... ματαιότης [mataiotes] – what is devoid of truth and appropriateness; perverseness, depravity; frailty; uselessness as a consequence of being purposeless or incapable of producing results.

B. It is a life that fits the severely restricted, earthly perspective of a person whose understanding is darkened to the point of blindness.

C. It is a life that is considered alien from the life that God offers because of the willful ignorance that is inherent in the person.

D. It is a life that a person embraces because of the hardness of his or her heart.

E. It is a life that will only spiral downward into callousness, sensuality and a greediness that feeds on an excessive and immoderate desire for further immorality.

F. In summary it is not a life of life but a life of death – the life of a person who is dead in his or her sins.

- (Ephesians 2:1–2a NIV) As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world.

SIDEBAR: ALL HUMANS ARE SPIRITUALLY DEAD APART FROM THE GRACE WORK OF GOD ...

- (Romans 3:10–12 ESV) As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” (Quoted from Psalm 14:1-3, 53:1-3)

Many people do not believe the comprehensive nature of the teaching regarding the lost, sinful condition of humanity. In fact, it seems that few believe these things, even many in the church who profess to

know God and believe his word. A common perspective is that, although imperfect, they do some things that are right and good in the eyes of God ... and after all they are just human and God being a God of grace will understand.

So we need to ask ... How do they come up with these thoughts? On what do they base their assumptions? How can they be so wrong and yet believe themselves to be right? What is the result?

We can only draw one conclusion – They do not fully believe and trust in the word of God. They have based their thoughts on their relationship with God apart from the very clear instruction of the Bible.

The tragedy is that these people are deceived as to the nature of their relationship with God because they have trusted in a way of thinking that is futile, devoid of truth and is useless. The result is that they remain alienated from God and dead in their sins, but believe themselves to be okay before God as they cling to a human standard of goodness and righteousness that falls far short of the glory of God.

- (Romans 3:23 ESV) ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

2. We do not learn Christ by living according to the principles of life that is not life at all, 4:20-21.

- (Ephesians 4:20–21 ESV) But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus.

A. We do not learn Christ by the thoughts and ways of humans that are not God's thoughts and ways and are lower than God's thoughts and ways.

- (Isaiah 55:8–9 ESV) For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

B. We must understand how contrary to reason it is for a person to think he can live the life of Christ in accordance with the thoughts and ways of humans who are in reality alienated from the life of God.

- (Colossians 1:21 ESV) And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds.
- (Romans 8:7 ESV) For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

C. We only learn Christ when we set our minds on the same premises by which we were saved—grace alone, faith alone and Christ alone.

- (Ephesians 2:8–9 ESV) For **by grace you have been saved through faith**. And **this is not** your own doing; **it is** the gift of God, 9 **not** a result of works, **so that no one may boast**.
- (Galatians 3:1–3 ESV) **O foolish Galatians!** Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. 2 Let me ask you only this: **Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?** 3 Are you so foolish? **Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?**

D. We must not assume that we have heard the truth about Christ—as in heard and believed the gospel.

- (Hebrews 4:1–2 ESV) Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, **let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it**. 2 For good news came to us just as to them, **but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened**.

E. We must not assume that we have been taught the way of grace by Jesus.

- (Ephesians 2:4–5 ESV) But God, **being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us**, 5 **even when we were dead in our trespasses**, made us alive together with Christ—**by grace you have been saved**.
- (John 1:16–17 ESV) **For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace**. 17 For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth came through Jesus Christ**.

F. It is urgent that each person determines whether his life is based the truth in Jesus—grace alone, faith alone and Christ alone or on the useless thinking of the old life.

3. We learn Christ when we consciously stop living the old life, are renewed in the inclination of our soul and are clothed in our new life, 4:22-24.

- (Ephesians 4:22–24 ESV) ... **to put off your old self**, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be **renewed** in the spirit of your minds, 24 and **to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness**.

A. The truth of learning Christ is that by the grace of God we reckon (*consider*) ourselves to be dead to the state and conditions of the old life.

- (Romans 6:11 NKJV) Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus** our Lord.

Put off ... to put aside or away; to stop a state; take off; to stop oneself being in a state or condition; conceived of as taking off a garment.

B. The person who stops living by the old ways begins a series of actions which reverse his corrupt thinking and change the inclination of his soul and renew the spirit of his mind.

C. He has now been made ready to learn Christ and be clothed in his new life in Christ.

Put on ... to be clothed; to be or become bestowed or endowed with a quality or condition; understood as being wrapped in a covering.

D. Our new self—our new life in Christ—is created after the likeness of God.

- i. The likeness of God means that it is designed in the mind of God in true righteousness and holiness.
- ii. This means that our new lives are designed and created with eternity and the glory of God in mind.

E. We need to take a moment and reflect on the stark contrast between the old life and the new life.

- i. The old life is a sinful, here-and-now life that seems right to humans.
- ii. The new life is a holy, eternal life that is right before a holy God.

4. Therefore having put away the pseudo-Christian life we must each one now speak the truth, 4:25-27.

- (Ephesians 4:25–27 ESV) **Therefore, having put away falsehood**, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 **Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger**, 27 and **give no opportunity to the devil**.

Falsehood ... ψεῦδος [*pseudos*] — a lie; a conscious and intentional falsehood; a statement that deviates from or perverts the truth; **in a broad sense, whatever is not what it seems to be**.

Contemporary usage: *Pseudo* is a prefix meaning false, fake, or sham. **It indicates that something is not what it appears to be, or it simulates something it is not**

such as in words like *pseudoscience* (false science) or *pseudonym* (a false name).

A. Pseudo-Christianity is identified in the Scriptures as having an appearance of wisdom or godliness.

Pseudo-wisdom and pseudo-godliness result from fallen humans attempting to interpret the things of God with minds that have yet to be redeemed and renewed in the spirit.

- (2 Timothy 3:5 ESV) **Having the appearance of godliness**, but denying its power. Avoid such people.
- (Colossians 2:23 ESV) These **have indeed an appearance of wisdom** in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, **but they are of no value** in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

B. The scope of this admonishment is not merely that a person stop telling lies but more importantly that this person must stop living a lie.

- i. For a person to live the life of God and walk worthy of his calling he must decisively put away all pretense from his life.
- ii. A person who walks worthy of his calling will speak truth to those who are near him
- iii. He does this for the sake of Christ and his body.

C. We must keep these things in mind as we discard our pseudo-Christian ways and speak the truth.

- i. We are to believe and practice these things.
- ii. We are to speak the truth knowing that at times this may provoke anger.
- iii. We are not to sin when this happens.

Anger is strong displeasure and is not inherently sinful. Strong displeasure becomes sin when we lash out ... such as with insults, misrepresent the person's words to gain an advantage, seek vengeance, etc.

- iv. We are to resolve our anger before sunset.
- v. We are to not give any opportunity to the devil by our sinful anger.

5. We must speak the truth in regard to our daily labors and in regard to the talk that comes from our mouths, 4:28-29.

- (Ephesians 4:28-29 ESV) Let the thief no longer steal, but **rather let him labor, doing**

honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 **Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as** is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

A. Do not rationalize stealing but encourage that person to work and share with those in need.

B. Allow no corrupting talk to come out of your mouth, but control what comes out of your mouth in this way.

- i. Only such as is good for building up.
- ii. Only such as fits the occasion.
- iii. Only such as gives grace to those who hear.

6. HAS NOT LEARNED CHRIST: The person who has not learned Christ will grieve the Holy Spirit and harvest only bitterness never having his heart quieted in the presence of holy God, 4:30-31.

- (Ephesians 4:30-31 ESV) And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 **Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.**

A. Impossible — finding quietness and peace.

- (Isaiah 57:20-21 ESV) But **the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet**, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. 21 There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

B. Inevitable — ending in bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor (loud), slander (damaging) and malice.

7. HAS LEARNED CHRIST: The person who has learned Christ will harvest righteousness from the presence of God in Christ in his life, 4:32.

- (Ephesians 4:32 ESV) **Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**
- (Isaiah 32:17 ESV) And **the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.**

A. The fruit of the new life will be displayed in kindness, tenderheartedness and forgiveness.

B. The harvest of the new life will be peace, quietness and trust forever in the presence of holy God.