

**WITH HEADMASTER JESUS
AT HOLINESS CHARTER SCHOOL**
(Ephesians 4:17-24)

I. OPENING ILLUSTRATION

A. Waiting for Superman (Slides)

B. MP: Loving parents, desiring the best for their kids, do what they can to create charter schools and enroll their kids in them. It's the same with us: God, desiring the VERY best for his kids, has enrolled us in Holiness Charter School. It's a no-nonsense institution, with a no-nonsense Headmaster, where REAL education happens, at a REAL cost to all involved. But O the joy on Graduation Day!

II. INTRODUCTION

A. Last Time (4:1-16)

Paul has explained that God is in the process of creating a new, eternal family of man to live with him in the new heavens and the new earth. This family is marked by unity: a unity that *presently* exists based on the fundamentals of the Christian faith, but that is also *being perfected*, as God brings the Church to full maturity in Christ. This maturity is accomplished by Christ himself, who gives anointed to leaders to the Church, who in turn equip the saints for the work of ministry, so that the whole Church may be built up, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The saints are to build upon the solid foundation of truth and love, and grow to full maturity in Christ. In so doing they are like a Bride preparing herself for the return of her Heavenly Husband, and for the unimaginable joy of life together with Him in the World to Come!

B. This Time (4:17-24)

This morning's text—and *most of the rest of the letter*—is about *walking*. In particular, it is about the *absolute necessity* of a certain kind of walk, a certain kind of lifestyle. This walk is marked by growth in holiness, by separation *from* sin, and separation *to* God. Paul insists that the saints cannot walk as they used to walk, when they lived in the world. Nor can they walk as unbelievers now walk in the world. Rather, they must walk with Christ, and as Christ himself walked, so much as may be possible in this life. In the verses ahead Paul will explain, in great detail, exactly what such a walk looks like. Here, however, he lays the foundation, probing the basis for our sanctification, and urging us to build well. The saints are a pilgrim people. They are called to walk *together* through the wilderness of this sin-cursed world, and as they do, to finish the work their Master has given them to do. To finish their work—and to reach their destination with joy—they *must* have a walk that is worthy of the Lord.

D. Outline of Today's Text: (Slide)

1. (17-19) How Students of HCS are NOT to walk
2. (20-24) How Students of HCS ARE to walk

III. (17-19) HOW STUDENTS OF HCS ARE NOT TO WALK (Slide)

A. Text: *This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind.*¹⁸ *They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.*¹⁹ *Having become callous, they have given themselves over to sensuality, so as to indulge in every kind of impurity with greediness.*

B. Key Points:

1. It is very *important* to Paul—and to God—that we no longer live as we used to live, or as unbelievers presently do live.

- ¹⁷ *This I say, therefore, and testify (or, insist upon) in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk . . .*
- MP: He sees something important, and testifies to it!
- “When the apostle admonishes, he does it so that those addressed may act *freely*; when he encourages, so that they may act *gladly*; but when he testifies, that they may act *reverently*.” – Bengal
- Change is not only possible, but necessary and certain to occur!
- In Adam, and in Adam's world, no fundamental change is possible
- In Christ, it is!

2. Our text reveals a profoundly important truth: Our *walk* depends on our *worldview*; our *conduct* depends on our *condition*; what happens on the *outside* depends on what's happening on the *inside*!

- Observe what our text says about the inner life of the non-Christian: Their *mind* (or manner of thinking) is futile (fruitless, worthless); their *understanding* is darkened; they are *ignorant* of God, and alienated from his *life*; their *hearts* are hardened and callous, insensitive to divine truth, beauty, and goodness.
- This is typical of Scripture: While the Bible is not at all indifferent to our behavior, it lays *far greater stress* upon the condition of our heart.
- Key texts: Mt.12:33-35, etc. (Slides: Change is from the Inside Out)
- Two applications:

1. Be grateful to God: Instead of being blind, we are *enlightened*; instead of being dead, we are alive; instead of having hard, callous hearts, we have *tender, sensitive* hearts.
2. Brethren, let us guard our hearts well (Slides)
3. Paul takes special note of the *futility* of the unbeliever's mindset—and so should we!
 - Futility: etymology: *easily poured out*; implies an investment of time, effort, and wealth that is ultimately wasted, poured out onto the ground
 - Wm. Hendriksen (Slide): “The apostle emphasizes a very important point, namely that all those endeavors which the Gentiles put forth in order to attain happiness end in disappointment. Their life is one long series of mocked expectations. It is a pursuing without achieving, a blossoming without bearing fruit.”
 - Examples of unbelievers who (appear to) have wasted their lives: Einstein (Pablo Picasso, Howard Hughes, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinham, Steve Jobs, etc.)
 - The danger to Christians, ungrounded in Scripture, of wasting much of their lives: Examples? Arius, Pelagius, Arminius; Hagin, Wimber, Walvoord, Hinn, Schuller, Johnson, etc.)
 - The great joy and privilege of having purposeful lives: (Example: Jesus and the disciples by the well in Samaria)
 - The importance of committing ourselves to the Lord and the Gospel: (S) Mark 10:29-31
4. Paul specifically warns against sensuality, impurity, and unbridled lust, citing them as earmarks of a life or culture grown callous towards God.
 - *Having become callous, they have given themselves over to sensuality (or, licentiousness, lasciviousness), so as to indulge in every kind of impurity with greediness (or, with a continual lust for more).*
 - The widespread sexual depravity of the Roman world: fornication, adultery, homosexuality, pederasty, gay marriage, cross-dressing, etc.
 - Eventually overruled by Christian teaching strictly situating sexual activity with the bounds of heterosexual marriage.
 - Now returning, due to the repudiation of Christian faith in the West
 - A mark of divine judgment upon a God-rejecting culture (Romans 1)

- In this toxic environment, Christians must cultivate a spirit that is *tender* to sanctity of marriage and family; to the purpose and lawful context or sexual activity; to propriety and modesty; and also to the perils of being *hardened* in this area by the excesses of the surrounding culture (e.g. of Lot).

IV. (20-24) HOW STUDENTS OF HCS ARE TO WALK (S)

A. Text: ²⁰ *But you did not so learn Christ, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him (seeing that the truth is in Jesus), ²² that concerning your former manner of life you must put off the old man, who becomes corrupt through deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; ²⁴ and likewise, that you must put on the new man, created according to God's likeness in true righteousness and holiness.*

B. Key Points

1. We are now with Christ in Holiness Charter School (Slide)

- *But you did not so learn Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him (seeing that the truth is in Jesus) . . .*
- By God's grace we have heard Christ, we are in Christ, and we are being taught by Christ in his school – and this school is WAY different from the one we came from!
- In this text, He gives us three foundational lessons

2. Lesson number 1: Progress in holiness involves *putting off*:

- ²² *that concerning your former manner of life you must put off the old man, who becomes corrupt through deceitful lusts . . .*
- Every human being, save One, is born “wearing” the old Adamic man
- Left to our sinful selves, we *become corrupt* by falling prey to *deceitful* lusts (Reading: Hendriksen)
- The saints *have* put off the old man, and they *must* (definitive/progressive)
- Because of indwelling sin (i.e., the moribund old man) the saints must be vigilant, lest they too be deceived by various lusts, and thereby polluted
- This is the negative side of sanctification: Thou shalt not!

Vital: I/2 of the scissors!

Our proper, lawful response to TSN: (2 Slides)

Big caveat: Easier said than done!

The struggle begins: Law/Grace and Sanctification

3. Lesson #2: Progress in holiness involves *spiritual renewal*

- ²³ *and be renewed in the spirit of your mind . . .*
- We have been renewed; we must be renewed (definitive vs. progressive renewal = spiritual formation)
- The crucial role of the Word in progressive renewal

4. Lesson # 3: Progress in holiness involves *putting on*

- ²⁴ *and likewise, that you must put on the new man, (who is being) created after the image of God in in true righteousness and holiness righteousness and holiness (or, the righteousness and holiness that come from the truth)*
- The new Man is the Last Man, Christ Jesus
- We *have* put him on, we *must* put him on (definitive/progressive)
- What we put on: New understanding, new affections, new attitudes, new choices: a whole new inner and outer life
- In this process, God is creating a MASTERPIECE!
- This is the POSITIVE side of progressive sanctification: THOU SHALT!

Vital: The other half of the scissors

Our proper, lawful response: (2 Slides)

Big Caveat: Impossible!

The struggle again begins: Law/Grace and Sanctification

- This produces TRUE righteousness and holiness

5. The Word and the Spirit Show the Way (Slide)

V. CONCLUSION: THREE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE ENROLLING IN HOLINESS CHARTER SCHOOL

- A. You will experience painful challenges and setbacks (Slide: Newton)
- B. You will make real, precious progress
- C. Graduation Day will be glorious!