

Christians Do Not Walk This Way

By Paris Reidhead*

Will you turn please to Ephesians, Chapter 4. Our Theme this morning, CHRISTIANS DO NOT WALK THIS WAY. Our Text, verses 17, 18, and 19, and references to the passage which follows through the 5th verse of the 5th Chapter. Therefore, I shall ask you to use your Bibles this morning.

The writer of the Proverbs said in chapter 30, verse 12, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, but are not washed from their filthiness." Paul is writing to the Church at Ephesus, and here begins the portion that you might normally have expected to have been the first, the 1st verse of the 1st Chapter. This I say therefore, (in verse 17) and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

Notice the first clause of that 17th verse: This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord. There are four things that I see in this text. Four things that I wish to share briefly with you. The first that is so clear, clearly stated by the Apostle is this, The purpose of the Prophet. Paul is speaking, using the Prophetic office, declaring the truth of God. Unfortunately most people feel that the word prophecy and the Prophet have reference to that which is uttered concerning the future. There is a great deal of prophecy in the Scripture, but very little of it relatively speaking has any application to the future.

The Prophet is the one who speaks forth the Word of God, whether it has reference to the past, the present, or the future. And Paul is exercising the ministry of a mouth to God, speaking forth the Word of God. And this is the purpose of the prophet, to speak for God, to be a mouth for Him; and God has through all ages found those whom He could use, by whom He could communicate His mind and His Will, and His purpose. To speak for God, concerning the Holiness of God, declaring the nature of God, revealing His mind and His will through His Law and Teachings, this is the purpose of the prophet; - to give a frame of reference whereby men may relate their attitudes and actions to that which God has commanded. And in this relating of what they are to what they see now God is, they will discover their need. The purpose of the Law as it was delivered by the Prophet was to give to the people that check list by which they could see their great spiritual need and come to the Lord to have it met. To speak for God concerning the nature of God then of course means that there must be a faithful and honest speaking to the people concerning their need. To speak for God concerning the sins of the people is a great portion of the prophet's responsibility.

White is that which we say is the presence of all color, and black the absence of all color, and we would therefore put in between the two all the shades and tints of color that we know. I might stand before you this morning and talk to you about a color which is real to me, but not to you. And unless I can give you some means of comparison, you will never understand what I am talking about. We hear today that we should speak positively. There should not be negative speaking. I do not understand how positive has any meaning unless it is compared with something negative. And I do not understand how that holiness means anything unless it is compared with sin and unrighteousness.

We have heard it said also that we should major on the love of God, but love has no meaning unless it is compared with wrath. And therefore it is necessary to speak on the wrath of God. Furthermore it is necessary to speak on those attitudes of heart which bring the wrath of God upon the life. The prophet, the one who speaks for God, must declare the whole counsel of God.

Now the prophet is to speak for God even when men refuse to hear Him. You recall that when God sent Ezekiel, He said, "You go. You say what I tell you to say. You give what I give you to share. And whether the people hear, or whether they forbear, they will know that a prophet has been in their midst. They will know that the Word of God has been spoken." (Eze. 2:4-8)

We understand from 2nd Timothy, the 4th Chapter, verses 3 to 5, that in the last days, perilous times shall come. Men shall be lovers of their own selves, and they shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (the hearers have itching ears, not the teachers) (And the teachers are brought to the people for the purpose of scratching the ears, relieving the itching pressure of the mind, as it were, and allowing the person therefore to be thus relieved to go on in comfort.) But Paul is very adamant in his instructions to the young man Timothy, when he tells him that regardless of what others may do, regardless of what may

happen, that when they will not endure sound doctrine but shall after their own lust heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, that he says to Timothy, "Preach the Word. Be instant in season, out of season, Reprove, Rebuke, Exhort with all long suffering and doctrine."

The prophet did not have to be received by the people, but he had to please God. Jeremiah would probably stand as the second greatest failure in Bible history. I think the greatest failure undoubtedly is Noah - 120 years of faithful preaching and he only influenced his own family. I think if you wish to find an evidence of failure, we would count that Noah would have to take the first rank. But the next one would be Jeremiah. He was rejected by the rulers of Judah. He was rejected by the ministerial association. They refused to hear him. He was rejected by his brethren. There was no one that stood with him...All alone, telling what would happen and the people would not hear. Jeremiah was the next greatest failure in Bible history.

But I wonder if we are not one day going to find that failure or success is quite a relative matter. I am so glad that when we read of that day when our works should be tried as fire, they will be tried not as to what size they are, but as to what sort they are. \$5,000 invested in wood would get quite a pile, in hay a larger stack, and in straw - well you can hardly calculate how much straw it would be. But when you put the torch to the wood and it burns, slowly of course, when it is finished it will be ashes. When you put the torch to the hay it will be ashes — and to the straw. It is therefore incumbent upon the prophet that he build for eternity, that he speak the Word that God will honour and will please God.

He is to speak for God. He is to speak for God when no one will hear, and he is to speak for God the truth which always divides. The truth always divides. I want to make this clear. I want you to understand that whenever anyone has spoken for God, the result of that speaking has been a division. It is the very nature of truth to separate and to divide. Now we might think in this day with great emphasis on ecumenicity, when there is a reducing down of all the standards so that the lowest common denominator will prevail and no one will be offended by another's belief, that this pleases the Lord. But I hear Him say, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace on earth, but to send a sword. I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household, and he that loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." (Matt. 10:34,35) Truth always divides.

In 2nd Corinthians, 2nd Chapter, we hear the Apostle as he speaks, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." (II Cor. 2:14-17)

You recall in the brief portion I read from Jeremiah, that 15th Chapter, the few verses there, verse 19 and 20, that Jeremiah had finally been told of God that there was nothing He could do to spare Israel from going into captivity. Not a thing. And this lament that comes from the heart of Jeremiah as he realizes the hopelessness of Israel, of Judah's plight, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!" In other words said he, "What is a lot is mine-to stand for God means that I have had to stand against everyone else, and I wish perhaps I had never been born, rather than to live such a life of contention." Then his lament again, "Oh Lord, Thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in Thy longsuffering: know that for Thy sake I have suffered rebuke. Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy Name, O LORD God of hosts. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of Thy hand: for Thou hast filled me with indignation. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt Thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail? Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before Me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My Mouth: (No relapse, no release, no furlough.)" Jeremiah is lamenting and complaining and grieving, and God says, "If thou wilt return-there is only one place to go. I can not go to you, Jeremiah. You come to Me. If you will return, and stand before Me, and if you will agree that your responsibility is to take the precious from the vile, then thou shalt be unto Me as My Mouth. This is the work of the Prophet, the preacher, the declarer of truth, the teacher of the word - to declare that there is salvation in Jesus Christ, but as Paul is not stating, as a testimony in the Lord, that when one is saved he is transformed, and he is taking the precious from the

vile. And he is separating, because even in Paul's day there was a tendency as in every day that everything goes. But Paul said, "No. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, the savour of death to death, the savour of life to life," - the purpose of the prophet.

We see also in this Text the picture of the perverse. Look at it. The latter part of 17 and verse 18. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other heathen walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling..."

This is the picture of the perverse, those that are under the sentence of death. The vanity of the mind. The highest part of man is his mind. It was made for the highest functions mortals can ever experience - to know God. For this is the part of man with which the Spirit of God communicates, the mind. But with the unsaved, with the heathen, with those that are without Christ, the mind is dedicated to vanity. This is what he is saying. The heathen have taken their mind as a tool, and used it for vain purpose.

It was Lin Yutang, the Chinese philosopher, who in the days before his return to the faith of Christianity made the statement that the human brain is just as much an organ for securing food as a pig's snout, that he saw it simply as the means by which man develops skillful ways to secure gratification for his appetite. And I submit to you that this characterizes heathen thinking, whether it be in enlightened America, or in any land where the light of the Gospel has never come: - That when the mind is used solely and only for the purpose of securing food to eat and clothes to wear and house in which to live, and tools to employ one's time, and position and status to exalt oneself above his fellows, it has become an organ of animal proportion. The vanity of the mind.

Oh I wish that every one of you would read the book of Ecclesiastes one month for a year from today, and let the wise man speak, Solomon. And he tells how he took the mind and sought by means of the mind to gratify the human heart. He tells how he built great works. And when he looked at the monuments to his energy and his vision, he said, "Now are you satisfied?" And the deep tragic echo from the empty chamber of his spirit was, "Vanity of vanity; all is vanity." (Ecc. 12:8) And you see him as he now proceeds to procure wealth. And then proceeds to secure position and status over his fellows, and finally gives himself to pleasure, sensuality — the vanity of the mind. And Paul is saying that that which characterizes heathen is that their mind is dedicated primarily to that which is gross, physical, material and will pass away.

We all live in a material world. Every man that has a family to support will support it by certain tasks. He may be a cobbler. He may be a business man with non-tangible work. He may be one that sells or makes. We recognize that there is a portion of the intellect that must be employed in such service. But we also recognize that with the redeemed heart there has been given sovereignly by God a new mind, a new mind. And if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation, and he has a new mind. And he is not groveling with the mind. But as William Cary could say, "My business is to serve the Lord. I cobble shoes to pay expenses." The vanity of the mind. The mind is not dedicated to, "How I can get more of this, and more of that, and bring and get and have and hold." It is that my mind is dedicated to the task of glorifying God in every responsibility. The vanity of the mind makes the things an end, instead of as they ought to be, but a means to the end.

And this characterizes the heathen. The understanding is darkened. How foolish are the heathen that deal with time as though it would be eternal, and deal with the eternity as though it would be for a moment. And make every preparation in order that they can spend their declining years in luxury, only then to cease and go out into an eternity for which they have made no preparation. Such folly. The understanding is darkened. Live as though a few breaths were all there is, when eternity remains beyond the breathing. Understanding is darkened.

And because they are alienated from the life of God, that one who lives as though time were all gives evidence that he has no part in the Life of God. He is alienated from the Life of God through ignorance, willful ignorance. This is not just lack of information. This is not stupidity. This is refusal to have God in the knowledge - willful ignorance. -Through ignorance, because of the willful blindness, that is in them. Having eyes they refuse to see; and ears they refuse to hear; and intellects refuse to think.

And then there is a characteristic to that one which is governed by the vanity of the mind, with the understanding darkened, alienated from the Life of God, he is past feeling. One of the characteristics of that terrible disease, leprosy is, that is anaesthetizes. No wonder God chose the leper to be the picture of the sinner. And how interesting it is to discover that the amputation of the leper's hand carries with it no pain, and needs no anesthetic, because the disease itself has so anaesthetized and destroyed the nerve system, that pain is impossible. And this is what the Scripture says, past feeling. "The conscience is seared with a hot iron." (I Tim. 4:2) The picture of the perverse.

Now I see in this something else. I shall share it with you. The proof of profession. The proof of profession. "But ye have not so learned Christ. If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former manner of living the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Here is the proof of profession." (Eph. 4:20-24)

The proof of profession is not to recall a historical event that took place where one felt the weight of Sin, or one felt the terrors of hell, or one felt emotional release in tears, or where one gave assent to that which had been presented in terms of truth. The proof of profession is not in what happened to you at any time in the past, but the proof of profession of your testimony of being in Christ is your attitude toward God, toward yourself, and toward others.

You say, "Well I know that there was a day when I was aware of my sin, and I repented." Good. Repentance to be real has to be permanent, and not temporary. The fact that you felt sorry for the crimes you have committed and interpreted that sorrow is not necessarily repentance at all. The fact that for a few days you purposed to please God does not prove your repentance was genuine. When your repentance is genuine, there is formed in your heart a purpose to please God which is increasing in intensity and fixity as the days pass. It is not to look to the past and say, "Seventeen years ago I was saved." "This is not," said Paul, "the proof of profession." Because it could be that that one who is looking to the event in the past and saying, "There, was mistaken then, and resting in false hope, is now ever moving nearer to the day of ultimate destruction."

I say this thoughtfully, and carefully. Any form of sin persisted in is fatal to the soul. I say it again. Any single sin persisted in is fatal to the soul. Repentance that dealt with 999 sins, and left the thousandth as a darling viper to be coddled in the bosom was no repentance at all. It was nothing more than an arithmetical bargain with God, who will not bargain with sinners. Repentance to be complete, must not only be permanent, but it must be entire. "You have not so learned Christ, not so learned Christ." (Eph. 4:20)

Someone says, "Well I am saved, and no one is perfect, and I -- no one can live without sin." My friend, if you have been born of God, you have partaken of the Divine Nature; and if you have partaken of the Divine Nature, you feel the same way about sin that Jesus Christ felt. You can not make peace with it. "You have not so learned Christ." (Eph. 4:20) The proof of your profession is that if you have heard Him, and have been taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus, that you put off concerning the old man the former manner of living. And that whenever your old manner of living comes to stop you, you turn on it and refuse it. If you are in Christ, you do.

I want to give you a parade. Last Monday we had considerable of parade, and everyone had banners. And I want you to see my parade. Here comes a man inebriated, staggering, talking through the side of his mouth, and he holds a banner over him, and he says, "I am sober." And he staggers down the street. "I am sober, because I made a vow to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and to the Alcoholics Anonymous that I would not drink. I am sober" He staggers down the street. And then there comes a man who is ragged, without anything on him. And he has a placard over his head. And he says, "I am rich. When I left High School, I promised that I would save my money and invest it wisely, and because I look back to that promise, I am rich." And he shuffles on in his rags, emaciated.

Then the next man comes on and he says, "I am clean." Dirty, filthy, disheveled. "I am clean." And underneath in small type it says, "Because when I left home I promised Mother that I would bathe on Saturday and use soap; I am clean."

And so, here goes my parade. I am sober. I am rich. And I am clean. And one staggers. And the other is in rags. And the other is in filth.

Is that what the Alcoholics Anonymous meant when they asked him to pledge that he wouldn't, that he would pledge and go ahead and do the very thing he had pledged not to do. Was there any virtue in the pledge unless the purpose was in it to obey the pledge. None at all.

Can you see a Christian, therefore, that says, "I am saved. I have been baptized. I have joined the Church." And yet he walks in the vanity of his mind, giving the mind to that which is gross and perishing. And he walks with the understanding darkened. He walks in ignorance, and he is past feeling. What means the placard? What means the placard?

What is the proof of profession? That you put off concerning the old man the manner of life, and have put on the new.

Now I want you to see one last thing before I close. And that is, the path to perdition. We have seen the purpose of the prophet, the picture of the perverse, a little glimpse of the proof of profession, but this Text gives us the path to perdition.

Notice now, please, in this 4th Chapter. This man that the Scripture describes as a heathen and walks in lasciviousness – "To work all uncleanness with greediness." (Eph. 4:19) Do you know what lasciviousness is? It is immorality on the mental level. It is the sins of the flesh, the sins of the senses, indulged in mentally, where the outward actions are never committed, but where the mind takes the sin and puts it on the tongue of imagination and turns it over. And God saw the generation of Noah, and he brought the flood because their imaginations were evil continually.

And the one that has had the new mind, has had the mind renewed, is going to deal with the thoughts of sin in his mind with the same abhorrence and hatred as one day he might have seen the sins of the flesh. The path to perdition is marked by lasciviousness, which goes to uncleanness with greediness.

Turn, if you please, over to verse 25. The path to perdition is marked by lying. That one that has partaken of the Divine Nature speaks truth with his neighbor for we are members one of another. And that one who walks in lying, and uses it as a tool of his purpose is evidently on the path of perdition, regardless of the profession that may have been made.

Notice now, verse 26. "Be ye angry, and sin not." (Eph. 4:26) The path to perdition is marked with wrath. We are talking about a path. And a path is where you take step by step. There will never come a time when a child of God can not fall into any one of these things. But as one would fall into filthy puddle, and would abhor it and seek to get out, so the child of God, seeing himself in this will get out of it. You give proof of profession by your attitude toward the things you are now seeing.

The path to perdition is marked by thievery. "Let him that stole, steal no more." (Eph. 4:28) And that man who would steal, either another's reputation, or another's money, or another's happiness, is a thief. "Let him that stole, steal no more. Rather let him labor, working with his hands that which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." (Eph. 4:28)

The path to perdition is marked by corrupt speech. Verse 29. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." And that one who allows corrupt communication to proceed out of the mouth gives evidence repeatedly that he is in the path to perdition.

Come down to verse 31. The path to perdition is marked by bitterness Do you know what bitterness is. Bitterness is a deep resentment of the spirit. And if you read James, the 3rd Chapter, you have the Divine commentary on it, for we hear this, "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, lie not against the truth, this wisdom is - deseendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual and devilish." (Jos. 3:14-16) Bitterness spoils our own comfort. Bitterness earns the hatred of others, and bitterness destroys all influence for good. And the path to perdition is marked by bitterness. And by wrath, and anger, deep within the human spirit, and clamor, - (The ceaseless use of the lips for no good purpose), and evil speaking. (The using of the lips to injure.) This marks the path to perdition, my dear. Not just little things that are small foxes that eat up the grapes, but the path that leads to death. Malice in the human spirit marks this path.

Come with me quickly down to verse 3 of the 5th Chapter of Ephesians. "But fornication, (Here is immorality between unmarried people) and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;- This marks the path to perdition.

Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting (filthiness of the speech-foolish talking which is in reference to corrupting good manners in the speech; jesting with immoral intent). All of these things mark the path to perdition.

Now I want you to see the end of this path and where it leads. Will you look at the 5th and 6th verses of Ephesians Chapter 5. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

What things? Go back to them. Lasciviousness, uncleanness, lying, stealing, corrupt communication, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, malice, fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting - for these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. "Be not ye therefore partakers with them."

Let me give you this scene, John saw it. He saw the end of this path. And I read it to you. "But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Rev. 21:8)

The purpose of the prophet is to separate the profane and the vile from the pure. The purpose of preaching is to give a frame by which you can measure your own heart. Every one of you have seen whether you have the proof of profession, or whether you are on the path to perdition.

I say to you, there is a Fountain of Cleansing for the repentant heart. Jesus Christ on Calvary's Cross shed His Blood not only to cleanse you from the stain of what you have done, but to give you a new heart and make you in His Image and Likeness. If you have been a child of God and have fallen into these things, you are going to deplore them and confess them and forsake them. But my friend, you will be judged by your fellows by the Word. And if you go out from this hall today, walking in lying and corrupt communication, in stealing, in bitterness, in wrath and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, you are holding a placard above you that says, "I am a Christian, but I am drunken, impoverished, and filthy." And what you are will totally contradict what you say. "You have not so learned Christ."

If you have been taught of Christ, as the truth is in Jesus; that you put off concerning the former conversation the old man; be renewed in the spirit of your mind; put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Your attitude towards sin determines who you are. Christians Do Not Walk This Way.

Shall we pray. Father, we are here before Thee, an eternity bound company. We are pilgrims all. Thy Word is as a sword. And we love its wounds, because we know they are faithful. Faithful are the wounds of such a heavenly friend. Now Father, as Thou hast shown to hearts something, there are those who perhaps are angry, saying, "Why must I hear this?" There are those who are perhaps rejoicing saying, "Oh see what God in His grace has done: and those that are saddened saying, "Ah my plight, my plight. What shall I do?" But whatever the responses are, Father, there is provision for it. May it be that every one that has discovered need will come to the place the need is met — the nail pierced feet of the Son of God, there in true repentance and faith to receive not only forgiveness, but a new heart. May every child of Thine that has discovered that he has stepped into the path, and bears the mud of it yet, come with confession to know cleansing. As we come before Thy Table, dear Lord, may we come with clean hands and pure hearts. Thou hast said that Thy Name is Holy. Thou dost dwell in the High and Holy Place, with him that is of a broken and of a contrite spirit. Oh God! Wherever Thou hast wounded us, may we there deal until the wound is emptied of all that would infect, and heal by Thy cleansing. God we would be clean. We would be pure. We would be Thy vessels unto honour. And so we break before Thee now. We wait in Thy presence. We mark ourselves by one another, and as we walk in the days to come, so we testify that Thy Word we will not forget. We have Lord the purpose of the prophet. We have seen it. The picture of the perverse heart, the proof of our profession. Oh God, show us the path that leadeth, that shineth as a bright and shining light, the path of righteousness and holiness, and lead us on in it. For Jesus sake. Amen.

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