

**Ephesians 4:17—So this I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,**

***So this I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, (4:17a)***

“*So this I say*” refers to statements which follow. “*Therefore*” points back to Paul’s encouragement to “*walk in a manner worthy of the calling*” (Ephesians 4:1). Clearly, the Lord was in agreement with Paul’s teaching—“*and affirm together with the Lord*” (Ephesians 4:17)—because “*all Scripture is inspired by God*” (2Timothy 3:16).

***that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, (4:17b)***

Paul, having begun the practical section of this epistle with Ephesians 4:1, again encourages his readers to “*walk*” in a certain manner. He exhorts them to “*walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk*” (Ephesians 4:17b). “*Walk*” means “to maintain a certain walk of life and conduct.” Scripture uses “*Gentiles*” in two different ways: (1) nations or peoples as distinguished from the Jews (Romans 9:24) (2) heathen, ungodly, unregenerate, pagan persons (1Thessalonians 4:5). Paul seems to employ the second application in Ephesians 4:17b.

To comprehend the significance of Paul’s words (“*that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk*”—Ephesians 4:17b), we must understand the spiritual climate inside the city of Ephesus. Ephesus was one of the leading Gentile cities within the Roman Empire and the commercial center of Asia Minor. It housed the famous temple of Diana (Roman name) or Artemis (Greek name), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (Acts 19:35). Because Diana was a sex goddess, this temple was the scene of unbridled wickedness, with sexual perversion leading the way. Idols of Diana, made of silver and other costly materials, were commonplace in Ephesus and a tremendous boost to the city’s economy (Acts 19:23-27).

Due to the wickedness that encircled the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote, “*that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk*” (Ephesians 4:17b). The believers at Ephesus were to separate themselves from the sin that permeated their surroundings and “*walk in a manner worthy of the calling*” (Ephesians 4:1). So should we! Peter’s words in 1Peter 4:1-5 serve as a wonderful reminder when tempted to adopt the passions of the unredeemed.

***in the futility of their mind, (4:17c)***

“*Futility*” is from a Greek word which can also be interpreted “vanity, folly, or emptiness.” “*Mind*” can mean “frame of mind.” “*Futility*,” vanity, folly, and emptiness characterize the unredeemed. Their self-centered and self-absorbing lifestyles generate an environment that breeds discontentment, disappointment, resentment, and despair. Jesus, the Source of “*truth*” (John 14:6; Ephesians 4:21), taught that life is found when lived for the good of others (Matthew 10:39). No wonder the unredeemed world searches passionately, yet unsuccessfully, for a reason to live. Even the great King Solomon, after gaining the world’s wealth, notoriety, wisdom, and power, classified the entirety of it all as “*futility and striving after wind*” (Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26).

**Ephesians 4:18—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;  
*being darkened in their understanding, (4:18a)***

“*Darkened*” is a perfect passive participle that can be rendered “*having been darkened*”—the passive participle confirming that a source (the powers of darkness controlled by Satan himself) acted upon these individuals, causing them to become more severely “*darkened*.” This intensified darkness increases,

proving that the depraved are not born as bad as they can be—not born spiritual corpses. Corpses don't respond to anything, even error. That darkness can intensify in the depraved heart proves that at least a smidgen of light exists as they progress in sin. This small amount of light is sufficient for them to recognize their need for a Savior, repent, exercise faith, and be saved.

*“Understanding”* points to “the mind, intellect, feelings, and affections.” Thus, sin darkens the *“understanding”* of the lost—again proving that the depraved need not be classified as spiritual corpses. So long as the depraved choose blatant rebellion over truth, God gives them up to their destructive desires (Romans 1:21-32)—all the while desiring that none perish (2Peter 3:9), but that all mankind be saved (1Timothy 2:4).

***excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart (4:18b)***

*“Excluded,”* a perfect passive participle, can also be interpreted “to be alienated from, to be a stranger to.” As the depraved (lost) walk *“in the futility of their mind”* (Ephesians 4:17c) and are progressively *“darkened in”* their *“understanding”* (Ephesians 4:18a), they become alienated from, and a total stranger to, *“the life of God”* (Ephesians 4:18b). This condition exists *“because of the ignorance that is in them”* (Ephesians 4:18b), an *“ignorance,”* not of worldly matters, but of the things of God (Acts 3:17; 17:30; 1Peter 1:14; 2:15)—an *“ignorance”* that remains due to their rejection of *“the truth”* (Romans 1:25) which they are capable of believing, even though depraved. The reason unbelievers walk *“in the futility of their mind”* (Ephesians 4:17c), are *“darkened in”* their *“understanding”* (Ephesians 4:18a), are *“excluded from the life of God”* (Ephesians 4:18b), and possess *“the ignorance that is in them”* (Ephesians 4:18b) is *“the hardness of their heart”* (Ephesians 4:18b). The root cause of this *“hardness of...heart”* (Ephesians 4:18b) is the sin nature (Adamic nature) they inherited from Adam (Ephesians 2:3). Due to this rebellious nature, the unbeliever basks in sin—yet can accept Christ in his depraved state whenever he chooses. If he continues in blatant disobedience and refuses to repent, sin progressively blinds him to desire the most repugnant immoralities imaginable. God gives him over to such sins (Romans 1:18-32), all along desiring that none perish (2Peter 3:9)—validating that He loves man enough to allow man to live void of His presence should man desire. This enhanced blindness within the depraved confirms that they are not born spiritual corpses, for a progressive blindness validates a previous presence of sight—some sight, at least, and enough to repent and believe.

The sin nature (Adamic nature) is eradicated (during the church age) when a person receives Jesus (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; 2Corinthians 5:17) after exercising repentance and faith while depraved. You may want to refer to the notes associated with Ephesians 2:3 for more input concerning the origin of this nature.