

## **“No Longer Walk As The Gentiles ...”**

*“This I say ... that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their hearts ...”* (Eph. 4:17f).

“Walk” is a favorite expression with Paul, found in nearly all his letters, and found profusely in this one. Seven times the word appears (2:2; 4:1, 17, 17; 5:1, 7, 15). As he uses it to describe the manner of one’s life, he sometimes describes things we are urged to do (4:1; 5:1, 8, 15); while other times he sometimes warns us against doing some things (2:2, 4:17). Ephesians were commanded in this text to *“no longer walk as the Gentiles do.”* The Ephesians had been and were Gentiles in the flesh (2:11) but now they were *“Jews.”* While they had been *“Gentiles”* before the advent and sacrifice of Christ, they had been *“separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel”* (2:12). After Christ’s law was given, there was a subtle change as to how *“Gentile”* and *“Jew”* were used. They could revert back to their former walk and become *“Gentiles”* again. Thus the distinction once designated those who were physical seed of Abraham from those who were not: now the distinction is between those who are spiritually Abraham’s seed, by walking in the steps of his faith, versus those who do not, which latter group could (and often did) include many who are physically Abraham’s seed (Gal. 3:5f). Let us notice the characteristics of the *“walk”* of a *“Gentile.”*

*“They walk ... in the vanity of their mind.”* *“Vanity”* may convey a variety of meanings. It may refer to one who is vain, proud, egotistical. It may suggest emptiness and uselessness. Solomon frequently spoke of the meaningless of mundane things saying, *“Vanity of vanity. All is vanity and vexation of the spirit”* (Eccl. 1:2). *“Vanity”* may refer to the folly of idol worship. When Paul was faced with the prospect of being the object of the worship of the people of Lystra, he restrained their efforts, adding, *“We also are men of like passions with you and bring you good tidings that ye should turn from these vain things to serve a living God ...”* (Acts 14:15). Gentiles walked (walk -- there are still *“Gentiles”* today) in the vanity of their minds, emphasizing things which have no substance, wasting their years and lives in pursuit of that which has the appearance of substance, like an inflated balloon. How a mere pin prick shows the folly of their delusion!

*“Being darkened in their understanding ...”* To be darkened in understanding means that they could not perceive things which should readily have been apparent to them. Many things darken one’s understanding. Israelites in

Egypt could not see God was granting them deliverance through the hand of Moses because of the severity of their trials (Exodus 6:9). The disciples of Jesus did not understand Jesus' words to the Pharisees when He said, "*There is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those things that defile the man*" (Mk. 7:5). When the disciples asked an explanation He replied, "*Are ye so without understanding also*" (Mk. 7:18)? So often it is things totally unrelated which darken our minds. We have much help in this from the "*god of this world*" (2 Cor. 4:4).

*"Alienated from the life of God ..."* To walk as Gentiles walk means such ones are estranged from the life of God. Not only do they have no life that is life; their very walk means they are enemies of the kind of life God wishes all to walk in.

Gentiles are alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance which is in them, which is there because of the hardening of their hearts. The ignorance of the Gentiles is a "self-imposed one," a willful act. Because they are wedded to the lusts of their hearts, they do not and will not see that the ultimate end of their practices brings ruin and death. Because they are "*past feeling*" ("*seared in their conscience as with a hot iron,*" 1 Tim. 4:2), they give "*themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness*" (4:19). Heed the apostle's advice that we "*no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk ...*"

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