

What's Wrong with Everybody?

Scripture: Ephesians 4:17-24

Code: 49-21

Well, as I said earlier in the service, we live between God's judgment and God's salvation. We live between divine wrath and divine mercy. That's what human history is. Human history is full of judgment. From the time of the Fall in the garden, judgment fell; death came. Human history is the chronicling of all the relentless judgment of God on the unrighteous and the ungodly.

But at the same time, history is the story of God redeeming His people. So we find ourselves, along with everybody else in human history, living between God's judgment on the unrighteous and God's mercy on the righteous. And God knows exactly what He is doing, and I will point that out to you in 2 Peter chapter 2, 2 Peter chapter 2. The text of this passage is focused on judgment, but I just draw your attention to verse 5, where it talks about God not sparing the ancient world, and it refers to the Flood that basically drowned the whole world except eight people: the family of Noah. When that judgment fell and God didn't spare the ancient world, He preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly. And then in verse 6, when God "condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter," He also, in verse 7, "rescued . . . Lot, [who was] oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men."

God drowned the world and protected Noah and his family; God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and protected Lot. And that is because of verse 9, "The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment." That's the separation that essentially tells the story of human history—judgment on the ungodly, and rescue and salvation on those who are righteous.

In the Old Testament we find a wonderful passage in the very last book of the Old Testament that leads us to this same understanding—the book of Malachi, the final book in the Old Testament. And judgment has been proclaimed, and there's a response among the people who are faithful to God. And we see that response in verse 16 of Malachi 3, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another"—they were talking about, "What's going to happen to us? This judgment is going to come"—"and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name. 'They will be Mine,' says the Lord of hosts, 'on the day that I prepare [My jewels,] My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.' So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him." That's always the dividing line in human history; that is the dividing line in all of humanity. History is the story of judgment and salvation, wrath and reward, condemnation and forgiveness.

Mark it: There's only one race. There's only one race: the human race. Only one humanity. But there are two families: There is the family of God, and there is the family of Satan. The apostle John makes this very clear in 1 John 3:9 and 10, where he says this, and it's unmistakable: "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of

God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who doesn't love his brother." There are marks of the children of God: love and righteousness, love and righteousness. That's what distinguishes the children of God from the children of the devil.

So again, there is only one human race. And I want us to understand that: just one race. We talk so much about race issues; there's only one race. As Ken Ham says, "And if you think I'm white, guess again. I'm just a different shade of brown from everybody else."

There's one race. The division comes between the children of wrath and the children of mercy. They live in two kingdoms: the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, which is the kingdom of God's beloved Son. The difference between the two is not superficial; the difference between the two is profound and far-reaching because salvation is such a radical transformation. The distinction between those who are in the kingdom of darkness and those in the kingdom of light is salvation. It isn't just something God declares to be true; it is manifest in the transformation of those individuals who are redeemed.

I show you that by drawing you back to the second chapter of Ephesians, which we covered months ago; but this is a great illustration of it and fits wonderfully with what we'll see in Ephesians 4 in a moment. So you see in Ephesians 2, verse 1, "You were dead in . . . trespasses and sins." Now, you can't use a more perfect metaphor for the human condition than *dead*. The worst thing that can happen to somebody is being dead. When you're dead, nothing worse can happen to you. And that is the metaphor that is chosen to describe humanity: "dead in . . . trespasses and sins."

Verse 2, "You formerly walked according to the course of this world"—which is the system of Satan—"according to the prince of the power of the air"—who is Satan—"the spirit . . . working in the sons of disobedience." That's a description of all the human race. And we all lived that way formerly, verse 3 says, "in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." Everybody, children of wrath.

"But," verse 4, "God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Compare the difference between verses 1 to 3 and verse 10. In verses 1 to 3 we're walking according to the course of the world under the power of the prince of the air, the spirit working in the world, the fallen world; we are sons of disobedience; we live in the lust of our flesh, desires of the flesh, and by nature are children of wrath. But we come down to verse 10, and all of a sudden we have been recreated in Christ Jesus for good works, which God had beforehand prepared so that we would walk in them. That's talking about this massive transformation in salvation. It causes a spiritual separation from what we were that is dramatic and manifest.

Now that is what Paul is going to be presenting to us in chapter 4. So go to chapter 4, our text before us, and I want to read verses 17 to 24. Ephesians 4:17–24, “So this I say”—or, “Therefore”—“[I] affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 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; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you [laid] aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and [you were] renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

The difference between the description of the old self and the description of the new self is stark; it's massive. You go from being—operating in the futility of your mind, darkened in your understanding, excluded from the life of God, ignorant, hard-hearted, callous, sensual, greedy, to a person who is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. It doesn't seem that we should need to say that, but that's one of the most missing messages in all of evangelical Christianity.

People who are saved are transformed. God knows His children. “I know My sheep,” He says in John 10. But His children also know they are His children because they have been transformed. Transformation is the nature of salvation—you're not a Christian if you haven't been transformed. And this is not something reserved for the New Testament. I know, 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away . . . new things have come.” We understand that as a New Testament truth: that when God saves, He makes a new creation, new birth, regeneration; you're a new person. And with that newness, all things are new; everything changes. But that was always the way with salvation.

Let me show in the Old Testament, for example. You go back to the Pentateuch, go back to the books of Moses, go back to the book of Deuteronomy, and hear the words of Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 30. Listen to what he said in verses 6 and 8: “The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. And you shall . . . obey the Lord, and observe all His commandments.”

You say, “Well, I know we're commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; but can we do that?” Absolutely, that's what salvation provides. “The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts.” There has to be a surgery on you. It's a heart work, and as a result, you will “love the Lord your God with all your soul and all your heart,” and you'll obey His commandments.

That is the transformation. And it's always been the transformation. Those who belong to God love God with all their faculties. You say, “Well, what do you mean, we love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? Is that possible?” It's possible because it's required, and because the Lord actually produces it when He saves us.

Now is it perfect? No, because all that our heart, soul, mind, and strength can offer is all we've got. He doesn't expect us to love Him the way we'll love Him in the perfection of heaven, but it's a total conviction that He is the one to be loved—and no one competes with that love. If you've been saved, you love the Lord with every faculty you have. They're not perfected, but as much as your soul can love Him, your soul loves Him. As much as your mind can love Him, your mind loves Him. As much

as your heart loves Him, that's how much you love Him, deep down; and your strength even reaches up to love Him, strength of convictions. And you obey. I mean, that's what we do. We don't live a life of sin—as I just read you in 1 John, that's characteristic of the children of the devil. We live a life of loving God and obeying His Word.

The prophets understood this as well. Moses was a prophet, of course. But if you go into the prophecies, say, of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, listen to what Jeremiah said when he was describing salvation. Jeremiah 11:4, speaking for the Lord, we read, “Listen to My voice, and do according to all which I command you.” Did you get that? “Listen to My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God.” “If you're Mine and I'm yours, then you listen to My commands and you obey them.”

Jeremiah 24:7, this is how God describes salvation: “I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the Lord; they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.” It's about the heart, and it's about love, and it's about obedience.

The great Old Testament prophetic passages about New Covenant salvation are found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Let me read you Jeremiah 31, which gives us this same emphasis—Jeremiah 31, verses 33 and 34. This is how God describes what's going to happen when people in Israel are saved or, for that matter, when anyone is saved: Verse 33, Jeremiah 31, “This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the Lord”—this is the new covenant; this is salvation—“I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” If you belong to God and God belongs to you, then His law is written on your heart; it's written on your heart.

Verse 34, “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the Lord, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’” That's salvation: when God forgives you and forgets your sin forever. But the mark of that is you have a changed mind so that it is dominated by the law of the Lord, and a changed heart so that you love the Lord with your whole heart.

One chapter beyond that, chapter 32 of Jeremiah, verse 38. God says, “They shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do . . . good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.”

The law of God written in your mind, the love of God written in your heart, the fear of God merely the means by which you express your worship to God; and there is no possibility that you would ever turn away from that. Why? Because salvation makes you captive to the love of God, the law of God, obedience to Him, and worship.

In Ezekiel there is a very powerful expression of this same truth in chapter 36. Familiar words, verse 26—well, we can start in verse 25. Here's God's description of salvation. In this case, obviously, He's talking about the future salvation of Israel, but it's true in every case: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.”

If you have been saved, you have been washed, you have been cleansed. You are no longer going to worship idols; you are no longer going to be marked by filthiness. Why? Because verse 26, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

How do you know when someone’s a believer? It is obvious. With heart, soul, mind, and strength, they love the Lord. They willingly, lovingly obey His law. They fear Him in the sense of worship. This is what salvation does; it is a massive transformation. And that is what our text before us is pointing to in Ephesians 4.

Now in the first part of what I read, verses 17 to 19, you have a description of the way things are. In fact, when Stephanie called me early in the week and said, “Can you give me a title for your sermon?” I said, “Here’s the title: ‘What Is Wrong with Everybody?’ ‘What Is Wrong with Everybody?’” Well, that’s basically described in verses 17 to 19. What salvation does is described in verses 22 to 24. But in between 17 to 19 (which describes the whole world in sin) and verses 22 to 24 (which describe the saints) is verses 20 and 21, and that speaks of salvation. Salvation is the dividing point.

“You did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus.” And it’s another way of saying, “If you’re saved, you don’t live that way, you don’t live that way.” The dividing line between sinners and saints, sons of God and sons of the devil, the righteous and the unrighteous, is expressed in learning Christ, hearing Him, being taught in Him the truth that is in Jesus. All those words are referring to the gospel.

And by the way, the language here refers to an action in the past. This is looking at conversion, at an action in the past when, by the power of God, the Ephesian Christians first heard the gospel, listened to it, they were taught the truth concerning Christ, and they learned Christ, they learned Him in the sense of real faith, and they were transformed. Because there’s such a dramatic change, Paul refers to the former life in verse 22 as the “old self,” and post salvation, verse 24, the “new self.” Literally you go from death to life.

So verses 20 and 21 look at the work of God in salvation; and that is what transforms people from what they were, verses 17 to 19, to what they are in Christ, verses 22 to 24. The moment of your salvation is the transformation miracle. Not a process, not a process; it’s an event. It’s a divine, supernatural event in which you were transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God’s dear Son, in which you ceased to be a member of the children of Satan, and you became a member of the family of God. It all happened in the moment of your salvation.

To show you the drama of this, turn for a minute to Romans 6. Paul in Romans really lays this out magnificently. This is important because there are lots of people who think that because they believe in Jesus they’ve been transformed, when they haven’t. Verse 17 of Romans 6, “Thanks be to God that though were you slaves of sin”—OK, that’s how you define the old: slaves of sin. “But thanks be to God, though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart”—and again, it’s the heart because God purges and purifies the heart—“you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed”—again, it’s about teaching, it’s about learning, it’s about knowing, it’s about the mind. And as such, verse 18, “[You have] been freed from sin, and you

became slaves of righteousness.” The transformation is so dramatic that you go from being a slave of sin to a slave of righteousness.

Verse 19, he says, “I’m speaking in human terms”—“I’m giving you a human illustration using slavery”—“because of the weakness of your flesh”—“to help you understand.” “For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now you present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.” This cannot be a more dramatic transformation from impurity, lawlessness, more lawlessness—lawlessness unto lawlessness. You become a slave to righteousness.

Verse 20, “When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. [Now] what benefit were you deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now you’ve been freed from sin and enslaved to God”—you’re not only enslaved to righteousness, you’re enslaved to God—“[to] derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.” Powerful language.

To describe salvation in the most severe terms possible, you go from death to life, and it happens because you hear that form of truth concerning Christ, which is the gospel. And Romans 10:17 says that “[saving] faith comes by”—what?—“hearing . . . the word of Christ.”

First John 5:20 says, “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him.” You have to hear the Word; you have to grasp the Word. The gospel comes to your mind; it isn’t induced by an emotional experience. “Son of God has come, and given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true.” And if that’s the case, then “we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

Let’s go back to verse 20 for a moment. “Learn Christ”—verb is *manthanō*; it means “to come to know.” You have come to know Christ. And when you’ve come to know Christ, everything changes. So you didn’t come to know Christ to live in the way you’ve been living. The verb *manthanō* means “to come to know”; the noun form is a “learner” or a “student,” and it’s the New Testament word for “disciple.” Do you remember when Jesus said in Matthew 11:29, “Take My yoke and”—what?—“learn of Me.” Salvation has to go through the mind and the understanding.

In John chapter 6 and verse 45, an affirmation of this very important truth. Jesus is speaking, and He says in verse 45, “It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught of God’”—and He’s quoting Jeremiah 31, which we just read. “‘They shall all be taught of God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.” You learn the message of the gospel; you learn the saving message of the gospel. First John 2 talks about coming to know Him, coming to know Him.

So salvation is the crux point of this passage. On the front side of it you have the old self, on the back side of it you have the new self, and the crux is the marvelous work of God in salvation. There’s a parallel to this in Colossians 3, and I just call it to your attention briefly. Colossians 3:6 offers wrath: “The wrath of God will come on the sons of disobedience, in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.” That’s the way the old life was.

But something’s changed. Look at verse 10, “You’ve put on the new self . . . being renewed to a true knowledge”—again, knowledge, understanding, mind, all those cognitive elements—“according to

the image of the One who created him.” So you were supernaturally, sovereignly, powerfully retrained, reeducated in the truth of the gospel. And again, this transformation is so epic that it can only be described as coming from the dead back to life.

I can’t resist one more look at Romans 6. If you pick it up at verse 3 of Romans 6, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus”—immersed into Him, not water baptism—“have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we . . . might walk in newness of life.” We were dead in sins and trespasses, but then God in His mercy placed us into the death of Christ. We were there. He died for us in that, died in Him, and rose in Him.

Look at verse 5, “We have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we also will be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that [by that the] old self was crucified with Him, in order that the body of sin might be done away with, and we would no longer be slaves to sin.” So down in verse 11, “Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” I’m just pointing these passages out to have you be clear on the fact that salvation is this amazing, complete transformation.

In 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 3, Peter writes this: “For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you.” He’s saying, “You’re no longer a party animal, and the people you once did all those sinful things with malign you; they don’t know what happened to you.”

Peter is marking the power of this transformation. It creates the necessity for new behaviors, new relationships, new friends, new places. And because this saving work is so dramatic, go back to chapter 4, verse 17. Paul begins this passage by saying, “[Therefore] I affirm together with the Lord, you no longer walk just as the Gentiles also walk”—you can’t live that way anymore. You didn’t learn Christ in that way; you can’t live that way anymore. You can’t; you’ve been transformed, you’ve been transformed. If you’re a true believer you are living in that transformation, and it is marked by your love for the Lord, your desire to worship Him, your love for those He loves, and obedience to His law with joy and delight.

What’s wrong with everybody? What’s wrong with everybody? Why is the world such an evil, chaotic, dark, demonic place? What’s wrong with everybody? I checked, this week, *Journal of Psychology*, and they agreed that everybody’s basically good. So you can wipe out that field.

What’s wrong with everybody is laid out here. This has to be understood. You’re different; you’re new. This is the testimony of Paul, by the way, according to verse 17, and also the testimony of the Lord. The Lord affirms this.

Now look at the word *Gentiles*—“You no longer walk . . . as the Gentiles.” That’s *ethnē*, ethnicities. Again, there’s only one race, and there are many ethnicities; only one human race in various shades of brown, depending on how much melanin you have or don’t have. But there is not only unity over the physical nature in humanity, there is unity over the spiritual nature of humanity: They are all

sinner, the whole human race, the whole human race.

But because of the calling that we have received from God, because of the unity we have in the truth, because of the truth that is written and the truth incarnate in Christ, because of the privileges of being granted spiritual gifts, because we have been graced by God to be a part of the body of Christ, because of the presence of the Holy Spirit conforming us to Christ—everything he’s been talking about in the first part of chapter 4—because of the responsibility to speak the truth in love, we can’t live the way we used to live. You can be sucked back in; you can be drawn back in. It will never be the pattern of your life; it’ll never be the unbroken pattern of your life. But the corrupt world tries to seduce you, tries to pull you in; but you’ll never again become a slave of sin. You’ve been transformed. John said in 1 John, if anyone goes out from us, it only manifests they never were of us—because you’re a new creation, and that’s eternal. All ethnicities are hostile to God, all ethnicities, dominated by pride, greed, lust, selfish pleasure—the whole human race, including us before our conversion.

Now Paul’s going to dig down a little bit into the condition of every human being, and he’s going to give us some specific descriptives. There are four of them here; we can sum them up in these words: selfish, senseless, shameless, sensual; selfish, senseless, shameless, sensual.

Now this is how ungodly people act because this is how they think. It’s a matter of the mind. You notice in verse 17, “Futility of . . . mind.” You notice in verse 18, “Darkened in their understanding”; you notice the word “ignorance.” It’s that they don’t know. First Corinthians 2:14, “The natural man understands not the things of God, they’re foolishness to him; and they’re spiritually discerned, and he can’t know them.” It’s always an issue with the mind: “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” And their thinking is corrupted.

Maybe the most familiar treatment of that is back in Romans 1, where it says, “Professing to be wise, [men] became fools.” Why? Because verse 21 says, “Even though they knew God”—God was revealed in His creation—“they didn’t honor Him as God or give thanks, they became futile”—or empty, or vain—“in their speculations”—their intellectual musings—“their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools,” and so “God gave them over to” sexual immorality, homosexuality, and a reprobate mind.

It’s a mind game. It’s about the truth coming to the mind so that there’s understanding. If you’re a Christian, according to what we just saw in verses 20 and 21, you were reprogrammed. You learned Christ, you heard Him speak to you through His Word, and you learned your lesson by the power of the Holy Spirit, and you embraced the truth that’s in Jesus. And that totally transformed you.

But let’s talk about the way people are. First of all, verse 17, they’re selfish. They “walk”—meaning daily conduct—“in the futility of their mind.” Their thinking is so warped. And I think it’s the possessive pronoun here that we ought to focus on: “their” mind. This is what happens to sinful people: They think they are the source of truth. They don’t subject themselves to the truth of God. They reject the truth of God—again, Romans 1. So their mind is basically the purveyor of their philosophy, theology, and religion. And if you think you are the source of truth, you are insane.

But this is not new. Back in the Old Testament, “Everybody did that which was right in his own”—what?—“in his own eyes.” This is what people do; they worship themselves. And it’s futile,

futile, although it's based on the wretchedness of human pride. The word *futile* doesn't mean pride or conceit, it means that which is useless, that which is worthless, empty, void, vain.

If you want to live a vain, empty, void, meaningless, useless, worthless life, then just live in your own head; just decide that everything that you can think of is the way reality is. This has taken over our culture to such a degree that there's a level of insanity we never thought we'd ever come to, where people even deny their biological, sexual identity, which is like not a mystery. Intellectual emptiness fills our society. And I heard the President say in his speech the other day that he wanted to do in his administration all they could do to protect the transgender community so that they can fulfill their God-given potential. So we're under judgment, and he's calling down more judgment—"Ramp it up."

There's massive judgment on us, evidenced by the sexual revolution, homosexual revolution, and the insanity that dominates the thinking of this culture. People are just fools; they think they're wise. And the universities are the places where all the deceived PhDs are, who are espousing things that they think are wise, when they are the leading fools. Colossians 2:18 describes this futility of mind as "inflated without cause by his fleshly mind." Peter says, however, 1 Peter 1:18, we have been redeemed from the futile way of life.

So what's wrong with everybody? They're selfish. They want to design their own standard of morality, invent their own religion. They want to be their own god. Secondly, Paul says, they're consequently senseless: verse 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." Darkened, excluded, ignorant, and hard-hearted. This makes you into a senseless brick.

Lost in the foolishness of their own mind, they become senseless, and their senselessness is perpetuated until it becomes hardness. "Darkened in their understanding"—*skotoō*, it means "to darken or blind." They are blind, and in their blindness they continue down a path of blindness that is defined next as being "excluded from the life of God," which is another way of saying they are dead, they are dead.

They're dead and blind, estranged from God, and it takes them down a path of the hardness of heart. "Hardness of heart," *pōrōsis* in the Greek, from *pōrōs*, which meant a very, very hard stone or was used to describe the tissue that developed when bones were fused together and became very hard. It meant "to be hard without feeling." "Same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay." You hear the truth and resist the truth, and what should melt your heart hardens it. When sin is ignored, when conscience is silenced, when guilt and conviction are not permitted, the heart grows harder and harder and harder, conscience becomes scarred. And we are warned in Hebrews 3 and 4, "Don't harden your heart. Don't harden your heart." It's deadly, it's deadly.

What's wrong with everybody? They're selfish, and they are senseless. Thirdly, they're shameless. In verse 19, "They . . . become callous." This means being past feeling. They don't feel anything. In fact, their callousness is so severe that Philippians 3:19 says this—this is a stunning statement: "Their glory is in their shame." "Their glory is in their shame." They are shameless. "Their glory is in their shame." They parade their shame. What they should be ashamed of is what they parade. This whole culture does that. The Internet is just full of it: people parading shame. What people should be ashamed of is their glory, their claim to fame. The verb here, *apalgeō*, means "to cease to feel pain."

Selfishness leads to senselessness, and senselessness develops into shamelessness. Then you're into verse 19: sensual. "They, having become callous," or shameless, "have given themselves over to sensuality," which releases "the practice of every kind of filthiness with greediness." They literally hand themselves over. This is self-inflicted; they hand themselves over. So selfish, so senseless, so shameless, they hand themselves over to sensuality.

The word there for "sensuality" is *aselgeia*, and it means basically "an unrestrained life." It's a step beyond shame, which is a step beyond senselessness. This is the disposition of the soul where selfishness, senselessness, and shamelessness reach their ultimate expression. There's no restraint; you flaunt everything.

Our culture is there, where people are proud of their perversions. They want to make sure nobody restrains them. They practice every kind of impurity, *akatharsia*, every kind of uncleanness, every kind of filthiness, and they do it "with greediness"; they can't get enough filthiness. "Greediness" is *pleonexia*, which is the insatiable craving, the uncontrolled appetite, the unsatisfied passion. This is what's wrong with everybody.

Before we were believers, it was what drove us as well. It doesn't always manifest itself in the same way. There are some restraints in some societies. Those restraints were ours for a few hundred years; they are long gone. There's some restraint offered by families and parenting, and they're gone. There's some restraints offered by education, they're gone. This is a powerful picture of those who have not learned Christ.

But the point is to get beyond that and to say this: "You have not learned Christ in that way." And that takes you back to verse 17: You can no longer walk like everybody else walks. You can't. You can't walk in selfishness, senselessness, shamelessness, sensuality—no, not if you have been saved. The separation is in verses 20 and 21—you learned Christ. You heard Him speak in His Word. You were taught the gospel in Him. You were taught the truth is in Jesus, and your salvation separates you from the rest of the world.

History is the story of judgment and salvation, wrath and mercy. You need to think on which side you would like to be: child of wrath, child of mercy; son of Satan, son of God.

Father, we're again grateful for Your truth, the clarity of it. It hits us like a sword—sharp, two-edge sword, piercing, dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. May everyone in this hearing look at their own life and ask if, in fact, they are a new creation, manifest by the One they love, the things they love, the people they love, the law they love, the obedience they love, and the worship they love. And reveal to those who think that because they prayed a prayer one time, one place, or have warm feelings towards Jesus, that they have received salvation. No. Salvation is a complete transformation.

And it isn't that we are everything we should be; we're not. But as much as our heart, soul, mind, and strength can love You, that's how much we love You. We're devoted to You, only. There will be no other god, no other redeemer, no other savior. There will be no other master, no other lord. And we love You, and we desire to obey You; and we desire to obey You and You alone. No other authority can command us, only You. By love and obedience we give testimony to our transformation, even by being here, by the joy of worship as our hearts reach out to say thanks to You. We thank You for

saving us.

We pray that You will even this day extend Your salvation to some who are here, that they might learn Christ, they might hear the truth of the gospel, come to salvation, and be the new creation that every believer is. For those of us who are Your children, give us continuing strength to be constantly renewed every day by the Holy Spirit and to resist the seduction and delusions of the former life. We ask these things for Your glory. Amen.

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