

**Jim's Notes**  
**January 16, 2008**  
**The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians**  
**Ephesians 4:17 - 21**

**Ephesians 4:17a**

**St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):**

It is the duty of the teacher to instruct and restore the souls of his disciples. This occurs not only by counsel and teaching but by awakening fear and handing them over to God. For when the words spoken by human beings are taken as if from fellow servants and lack the power to reshape the soul, it then becomes necessary to hand our very words over to the Lord. This is what Paul does here. (Homily on Ephesians 12.4.17)

**Ephesians 4:17b**

**Origen (AD 185 – 251):**

Consider what Paul calls futility of mind. This occurs when someone has a mind but does not use it for contemplation, instead surrendering it to captivity under Satan. (Palestinian Catena on Psalm 118.37)

**St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):**

What is meant by “the futility of their minds”? It is being preoccupied with futile things. This is what the Preacher in Ecclesiastes referred to when he said, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). But someone might say, “if these things are all vain and vanity, why have they come into being? If they are God's works, how are they vain?” And there is great debate about this. But listen, beloved: he did not say that the works of God are vain, far from it! . . . “Vanity of vanities” refers to splendid houses, enormous and inflated wealth, herds of slaves strutting about the market, conceit, vainglory, arrogance and boastfulness. All these things are vain. Such things are not created by God but are of our own creating. Why are they vain? They lead to nothing good. (Homily on Ephesians 12.4.17)

**Ephesians 4:18**

**Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):**

By hardness of heart he means a complete lack of remorse, When parts of the body are hardened they feel no sensation, as though they were completely dead. This may happen to the heart. (Epistle to the Ephesians 4.18)

## **Ephesians 4:19a**

### **Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):**

They have lost their moral compass through lack of hope in a future life. Living now as if they had no future, they pollute their own lives with the foulest behaviors. They refuse to submit themselves to the most elementary requirement of faith, which brings their pleasure-seeking into accountability in relation to the future life. It is this future life that these people declare to be ridiculous. Hence they pretend to have a right to debauch themselves, They covet the goods of others with ravenous greed, as though there were no life whatever after this little space. (Epistle to the Ephesians 4.19)

### **St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):**

If the cause of their licentiousness is ignorance, why reproach them? Why not just inform them? For the one who is ignorant should not justly be punished or reproached but taught what he does not know. But how quickly Paul takes away from them this easy excuse: "They have become callous and given themselves up to licentiousness greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness. . . ." He shows here that the cause of their hardening was their own voluntary way of life. Their way of life arose freely out of their own laxity and lack of remorse. (Homily on Ephesians 13.4.17-19)

## **Ephesians 4:19b**

### **Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):**

At first their sickness was lawlessness. Then it became indulgence. Having slipped then into a lawless way of life, they gradually came to suffer from lack of remorse. Finally they ventured out toward every sin without fear, living the life of corruption beyond indulgence, This is what he means by "becoming greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness." (Epistle to the Ephesians 4.19)

## **Ephesians 4:20**

### **Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):**

To believe in Christ is to obtain immortality and receive eternal life. For he himself is life. He himself is light. He himself is eternity. He himself is the one who overcomes death. He has by overcoming death overcome us too through the fulfilled mystery of salvation. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.4.20-21)

## **Ephesians 4:21a**

### **Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):**

It is Christ himself who teaches us about himself! When we are "taught in him" we learn who he is, how great we should reckon him to be and what hope is in him. We learn "in

him" what sort of people believer sought to be. Anyone who has "learned Christ" knows that he rose from the dead to be the pattern for the faithful. He teaches that there is great hope after this death for those who love God. (Epistle to the Ephesians 4.21)

**St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):**

If all who seem to hear Christ did indeed hear him, the apostle would never had said this to the Ephesians. They were those to whom he had already revealed the promises of Christ. Why would he then say conditionally, "if indeed you have heard him?" To know Christ is the same thing already as knowing virtue. To hear of Christ rightly is the same as being attentive to all the virtues: wisdom, justice, temperance, fortitude and the other names by which Christ is called. Therefore if anyone has indeed heard and learned Christ, he would not be living "in the futility of his mind" nor "be darkened in understanding" nor "be alienated from the life of God." He would already have practical knowledge, since his ignorance would have been dispelled, his darkness illuminated and every blindness lifted from the eyes of his heart. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.4.20)

**Ephesians 4:21b**

**St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):**

On the one hand the name Jesus refers to the man who was assumed by the Word, the man born from the Virgin . . . Then again it refers to the Word of God: "for to us there is one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things" (I Corinthians 8:6) . . . When Paul says "as truth is in Jesus" he is speaking of the temple of God in which God the Word dwells. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). God is the Word. As life dwells in him, so he also is life . . . In this same way the Son too may be called the truth, and truth may be said to dwell in him. In saying this we do not separate God the Word from the humanity he assumed. The man he assumed is not someone else. According to our understanding of certain passages we give different titles to him whom we believe to be the one Son of Man and Son of God, both before and after the virgin birth. . . . In none of the patriarchs, in none of the prophets, in none of the apostles did truth reside as it did in Jesus. For others know in part and prophesy in part and see "as through a glass darkly" (I Corinthians 13:9, 12). In Jesus alone the truth of God has appeared. He confidently asserts "I am the truth" (John 14:6). (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.4.21)