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FOCUSED ON THE WORD

# Understanding Why the Unregenerate Don't Vote Right



**I**t always intrigues me when a Christian is bewildered by the fact that unbelievers often do not vote right. It shouldn't surprise you, my friend—especially after you study this week's passage!

The idea of new life in Christ differentiates Christianity from other religions of the world in this way: accepting Jesus into one's heart is the beginning of a personal relationship with God. This personal relationship idea is repeated throughout the New Testament (NT) (Romans 6:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and Galatians 2:20); herein is the miracle of salvation that begins when we repent from sin and beg Christ to save us.

*Continued next page*

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**WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES**

**Governors:** Fridays 9am (EST), Zoom

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**Senate Members:** Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served

**House Members:** Thursdays 8am, AG Hearing Rm., Longworth 1302, hot breakfast served

*The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.*



MINISTRY UPDATE

## CapMin Recruits LGM Ministry Partners at SBC Convention



A visit from Dr. Randy Adams

The convention hall doors opened at the SBC annual meeting, and pastors and church leaders began to flood the Capitol Ministries' booth wanting to know more about how to launch discipleship Bible studies to city and county office holders in their neighborhoods. "Doors opened and lines immediately began forming in front of our booth," said Brian Hanson, CapMin international ministries global director. "SBC Conference participants were well aware of our ministry; they had an agenda and it was to seek us out." Some 11,000 to 14,000 people from Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated churches attended the 2024 annual meeting that was held recently at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. CapMin and SBC-affiliated churches have a lot in common including a traditional,

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When we possess a personal relationship with God via the regenerating work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, we become indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who simultaneously leads us into all truth.

Such is not the case with the unregenerate—as Ephesians 4:17–20, this week's passage, serves to illustrate! After you study what follows, you will not be so surprised as to why non-believers so often vote the way they do. So, let's labor in evangelism to get them saved!

Read on, beloved.

Ralph Drollinger

### I. INTRODUCTION

This week I would like to examine Ephesians 4:17–20. In its closest context, this passage is a direct exhortation to connect the behavior of the believer to the doctrine of the believer. The NKJV conveys that particular idea explicitly when it says, ***This I say, therefore***, signaling that what is about to be said is based on what has already been said. In the broader context, when the Holy Spirit regenerates the believer, there is an imputation of newness of life. That person is "born again" in a spiritual sense. The gist of the Apostle Paul's meaning in this passage is that God's redemption changes the believer: ***For our citizenship is in heaven*** (Philippians 3:20). Therefore, our respective thinking, lifestyle, actions—and yes, even our voting—should be drastically different than that of an unregenerated-by-the-Holy Spirit individual. Even though the believer remains "in the world" post salvation, he is not to live according to the thinking or the ways of the world (cf. John 15:19).

What follows then are biblical characteristics of unregenerate individuals—characteristics that should no longer be a part of

the believer's life. Ephesians 4:17–20 serves to illuminate why those who, biblically speaking, are in rebellion toward God, i.e., the unregenerate, have difficulty (among many other issues) casting votes for matters that are biblically explicit and simple to understand (in one word, perspicuous).

Mind you, what follows is a powerful and direct passage that most pastors today simply skip over because it so condemns those who are without Christ. But in keeping with my discipline of teaching the whole of the Bible (Acts 20:27), such a study is imminent and unavoidable.

***So this I say, and 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.***





VERSE OF THE WEEK



## 2 Corinthians 5:20

*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

Paul's lead-in statement, *So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk*, uses the Greek word for walk as a metaphor to describe the ongoing lifestyle of the believer after he has been saved. The believer is commanded not to *walk just as the Gentiles*. This Greek word for *Gentiles* is *ethnos*, which has the idea of "other peoples in the world." Contextually, it means "those who are unregenerate and ungodly."

The following four characteristics of the unregenerate should be foreign to those walking in and with a new nature who are in Christ, those who have, per the vocabulary of the passage, learned Christ.

As you study the following, compare yourself to the descriptors and ask yourself whether these characteristics are descriptive of you. Ideally, they are not.

### II. FUTILE THINKING

*in the futility of their mind* (v. 17)

The first of four descriptors of the unregenerate is keyed by Paul's incorporation of the Greek word translated *futility* (*mataiotes*), which means "vanity" or "emptiness." As used contextually herein, *futility* relates to the pursuits of our *mind* or intellect. Notice that throughout this entire passage, the intellect is what leads to manifested ungodly behavior. Accordingly, this passage identifies the fact that

#### Unbelievers think differently from believers.

That statement should come as no shock to most, but understanding this statement is attributed to the power of regenerative, transforming faith in Christ! The starting point of sin, according to Scripture, is the *mind*, not environment.<sup>1</sup> Why? Because the unbeliever's *mind* is informed by his or her fallen self—not the transformative

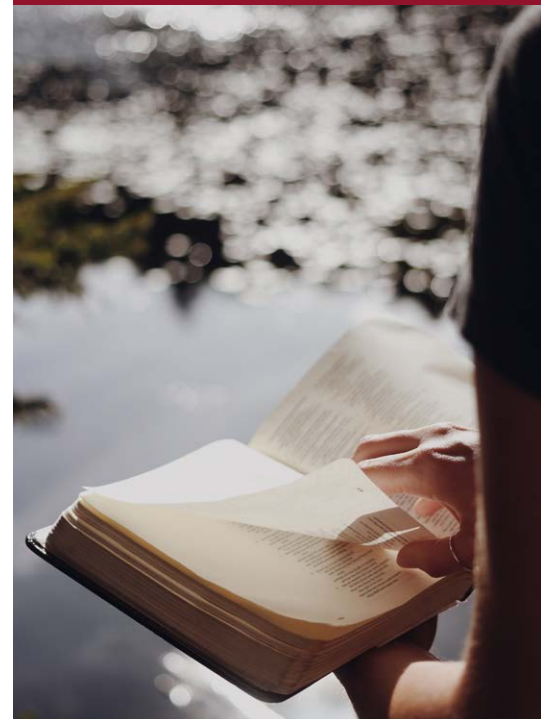
(cf. Romans 12:2), indwelling Holy Spirit. Nor is the unregenerate *mind* informed by God's Word, whereas the believer's epistemological source is captive to, i.e., a slave to, the Word of God. In essence, the non-Christian is his own authority, and he reasons outward from his or her finite autonomy, starting with "Well, I think ...."

Such a beginning point for reasoning and subsequent behavior always leads to self-centeredness, aimlessness, and meaninglessness. Dr. Well-I-think is not a good philosopher. And even though such *futility* is equivalent to the Old Testament (OT) Hebrew words *vanity and striving after wind* (Ecclesiastes 2:26), the unregenerate spend their whole lives consumed by, clawing at, and clamoring after the mental pursuit of wrong objectives. How sad! The believer, on the other hand, has come to know the living God of the universe Who has disclosed Himself in the Scripture. The believer's thinking, therefore, is not vain or empty because it is based on and beholden to a source outside of self—a source outside of his own fallen nature—God's revelation in the Bible.

#### Do you submit to and base your opinions and decisions on God's Word, or are you the preeminent authority for all determinations?

Whereas the former displays godly wisdom, the latter is a manifestation of what this passage labels as *futility*. In fact, in James 3:13 to 4:3, the author, James, calls this in contrast, *the wisdom of the earth* versus *the wisdom from above*.

The fall of man in Genesis 3 is the causal agent for what conservative theologians label "the noetic effect of sin." That's to say that when sin entered the world, it altered man's ability to think straight—and the closer he gets to moral truths, the more warped his fallen thinking is evident. In



Consistent proclamation of the Word and the making of strong disciples quell the progressive consequences of unbelief and illuminate darkness in the Capitol community and the culture as a whole.



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historical view of theology, a high view of Scripture, depth of doctrine, and application of practice, and conference participants were familiar with our ministry. CapMin had a valuable asset in Dr. Randy Covington, Executive Director/Treasurer of the SBC's Alaska Baptist Resource Network, who spent some time at the booth explaining our mission to visitors. Well acquainted with CapMin, Dr. Covington teaches the weekly Bible study to Alaska legislators. Manning the booth was Pastor Hanson; Pastor Matt Goodsell, North America global director; Pastor Cheyne Day, Arkansas ministry leader; and Pastor Brian Solomon, global director of training. Pastors Hanson and Solomon also co-lead a ministry to Ohio legislators, and Pastor Goodsell leads a ministry to Missouri legislators, aides, and Capitol staff. In all, nearly 80 people signed up to learn more about partnering with us to establish ministries to political public servants. CapMin is in the process of following up with potential recruits.



summary of the point, the unregenerate are the victims of the *futility of their mind*.

But we've only just begun to understand the whole thrust of this powerful passage.

### III. IGNORANT UNDERSTANDING

*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* (v. 18)

Unbelievers are *futile in their mind* because they both *ignore* (*agnoia*) and *harden* (*porosis*) their *heart* (*kardia*). *Porosis* is a word used both then and now to identify a condition of hard formations in joints that would lead to immobilization, i.e., a paralysis or a petrifying effect. Paul uses this word to vividly picture someone who continually chooses to sin. As a result, this person becomes increasingly immobilized, insensitive, and paralyzed to God's truth. This volitional direction leads to increasingly deleterious results: *being darkened in their understanding* of God's ways.

Their intentional *ignorance* of God's truth serves to increasingly calcify *their heart*. In other words, they have alienated and *hardened* their minds from the truths that are internally evident within them. In Romans 1:18–20, God Himself says the following in this regard:

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

This passage is a twin sister to the Ephesians 4 passage under study. The reason un-

believers have no life in God is that they choose to rebel against God, passively and/or aggressively. They resolve to *ignore* and *suppress* that which He has made *evident within them*. By mentally rejecting Him, their *understanding* is continually *darkened*. For example,

**Unbelievers become hardened in their beliefs in Darwinism or evolution, which, in summary states, "Nothing times nobody equals everything."**

Others, more "religious" in their outward persona, but nonetheless, not repentant of personal sin nor dependent on Christ in humility for their salvation, quote the findings of the Jesus Seminar which "voted out" Jesus' deity! Such ridiculous viewpoints illustrate *ignorant hearts*. Better understood, the Greek word for *ignorant hearts* in this passage is *kardia*, which means "minds." All the while they outwardly postulate biblically antithetical ideologies, they are *suppressing* that which they know deep down to be true.

Later, in his first chapter to the Romans, Paul succinctly describes the ungodly as ones *professing to be wise* who instead *became fools* (1:22). In 2 Timothy 3:7, Paul gives yet another descriptive insight, stating that unrepentant sinners are *always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*. Commentator MacArthur has insightfully summarized *ignorant understanding* in this way:

The ungodly are unresponsive to truth. Just as a corpse cannot hear a conversation in the mortuary, the person who is "dead in [his] trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1) cannot hear or understand the things of God, no matter how loudly or clearly, they may be declared or evidenced in his presence.<sup>2</sup>





And if you ever wonder why certain individuals on your subcommittee do not seem to get your biblical argument, here is the reason. It's unlikely to be because you lack perspicuity or communication skills; rather, it is because they are spiritually incapable of getting it; they are spiritually deaf! Don't be offended or take it personally when others reject your biblical positions; this passage informs you as to why: you should absolutely expect it! It therefore follows,

**The greatest need of the unbeliever is a spiritual hearing aid—new life in Christ!**

Evangelizing your colleagues is the best way you can aid other members. Realize today that unbelievers—pre-salvation—come into office with *futile thinking* and *ignorant understanding* (the first two points of this outline).

It is, therefore, impossible for unregenerate lawmakers to vote biblically, in ways that are pleasing unto the Lord all the time, my friend! Their *hearts*, says Paul, have a sinful bias. (Praise God when they do vote right!) This realization is the precise reason why your proffering of saving faith is essential to, and a prerequisite for, any societal change for the better that might be wrought through policy enactment. Take note:

**Your evangelism skill as a public servant is more important than your elocution of solid policy positions!**

Wise up to this assertion. That conclusion is based on this week's passage! You need to embrace what the Word of God is saying to you lest you continually spin your wheels with lesser priorities while serving in government.

What is doubly sad about the unregenerate politician is this: when public servants continue in their *hardness*, God will *give them over*, and the sinner will seal his or her own fate. The unsaved become forever *excluded from the life of God* (cf. Romans 1:24, 26; Revelation 22:11). Learn to identify those in this spiritual condition, as sad as this biblical reality is, and as difficult as it is to exegete what God is saying in this passage. The longer a person rejects Christ, the greater his or her depravity becomes.

#### IV. CALLOUS BEHAVIOR

*And they, having become callous have given themselves over to sensuality* (v. 19)

As the unregenerate continually and habitually blot out the truths of God and His accompanying conviction of sin—truths that they know deep down are what is right—they become *callous* (*apalgeo*), which means “to cease to feel pain.” As a result, they give themselves over to *sensuality* (*aselgeia*). This word carries the idea of the absence of all moral restraint, especially in the area of sexual deviation. More literally, it is the state of “no longer bridle self-indulgence.” In the same context and use of the same word, the Apostle Peter describes those characterized by *aselgeia* as people who are *daring and self-willed* (2 Peter 2:10–12). Such people care not what others think; they have no sense of shame because their conscience (according to our parallel passage in Romans, chapter 1) has been cauterized.

Furthermore, *having become* carries the future tense thought that a downward progression takes place in the life of the unregenerate. This level of classification indicates that these folks have *given themselves over* (cf. Romans 1 where this phrase is stated three different times in describing the same situation—only there it says that God actually gives up on them). Both of these passages serve to profoundly communicate the theological idea that God's com-

Roger Sherman



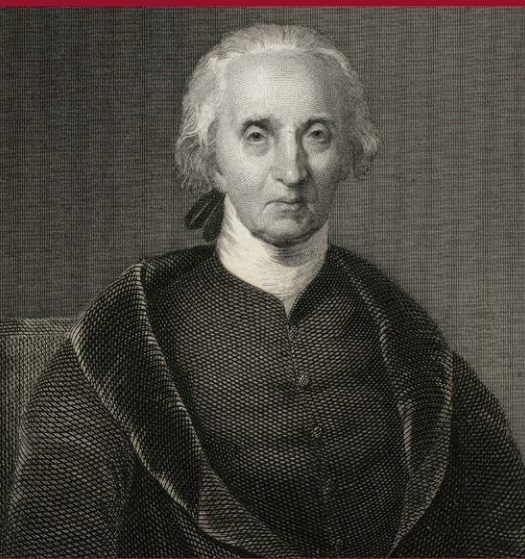
**“I believe that God ... did send His own Son to become man, die in the room and stead of sinners, and thus to lay a foundation for the offer of pardon and salvation to all mankind, so as all may be saved who are willing to accept the Gospel offer.”**

— Roger Sherman, signer of the Declaration of Independence, signer of the Constitution, “Master Builder of the Constitution,” judge, framer of the Bill of Rights, U.S. senator.

Lewis Henry Boutell, *The Life of Roger Sherman* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1896), 271–273.



Charles Carroll



“On the mercy of my Redeemer I rely for salvation and on His merits, not on the works I have done in obedience to His precepts.”

— Charles Carroll, signer of the Declaration of Independence, delegate to the Constitutional Convention, framer of the Bill of Rights, U.S. senator.

Lewis A. Leonard, *Life of Charles Carroll of Carrollton* (New York: Moffit, Yard & Co, 1918), 256–257.

mon, restraining grace is now nowhere to be found in the life of such an individual. God’s otherwise gracious curtailment and restraint of our sin—at this level of unregeneracy—has now been removed.

Contradistinctively, those who are believers possess a deep sense of remorse, guilt, pain, and repentance over their sin—quite the opposite of *callousness*! Make sure you understand the following:

**When the Holy Spirit invades, convicts, regenerates, and empowers, He also sensitizes and illuminates throughout the lifetime of the believer!**

Praise God! What a great gift and miracle is His sustaining and persevering gift of salvation (cf. Hebrews 2:3)!

Politicians in this state of spiritual degeneracy are impervious to the moral depravity of their ways and their votes; in their *callous behavior*, they carry not the mind of God whatsoever—nor should anyone expect them to! Theirs are deep-down, undealt-with spiritual problems. Beloved, again, this passage teaches us that such attitudes among your seatmates should not surprise those who are biblically literate.

### V. IMPURE PRACTICE

*for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness* (v. 20)

As if the first three descriptors that Paul has put forth in this passage are not enough, now things get even worse in the downward spiral of unregeneracy. The word for *practice* (*ergasia*), carries a profoundly significant meaning. Paul chooses a word under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that communicates much more than

the idea of a personal repetitive ritual, although that is in view here. *Ergasia* refers to a business *practice*. The Scriptures state in this passage that *callous* unbelievers are those who have fallen so low that they have made a business out of *impurity* in some way! One obvious illustration in America is “the porn industry [which] generates more income than the combined revenues of ABC, NBC, and CBS and more than the combined revenues of NFL, NBA, and MLB. In the USA, the porn industry generates between \$15 billion–\$97 billion a year. Every second, \$3,075.64 is being spent on pornography.”<sup>23</sup> Building a business based on and in *impurity* is not only evident in L.A., but in D.C. as well.

Many are the unregenerate public servants characterized by *impurity* who manifest such *callous practices* as revealed in and by their all-out quest for power!

They will do anything, they will stoop to the lowest forms of sinfulness, unaffected by conscience in their lustful quest for power! Such is a broader application of the biblical meaning of *the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness*.

In fact, the Greek word for *greediness* (*pleonexia*) is closely aligned with *impurity*. Both words carry the idea of “uninhibited lust for that which is wanted.” *Sensuality*, *impurity*, and *greediness* are all identifiable manifestations of unregenerate individuals who will use or bulldoze over others for selfish gain and the fulfillment of personal wantonness. Such is characteristic of the pattern and end result of those who continually reject God’s voice in their hearts; this, my beloved friend, is where life leads when a person repeatedly, consistently, and habitually rejects Christ.

The ideas from the previous outline points of having *given themselves over* (IV.) and being *excluded from the life of God* (II.) are based on personal decisions to pursue debauchery. As a result, summarily, they





are now incapable of salvation because they themselves have cauterized their conscience toward the things of God.

Oh, my friend, I pray that you are not one of these! At the risk of sounding harsh and unloving, the phrase “throw the bums out” is an appropriate biblically based response as to how believers should treat such *hardened* individuals who now hold or seek public office. When politicians are motivated by such base, selfish attitudes, wherein they are in transactional benefit from things *impure*, for them to vote correctly now or in the future is obviously impossible.

**By the grace of God,  
not every unbeliever  
who serves in public  
office is this hardened.**

But those who are transactionally evil—those individuals commensurate with corruption—are those who should be shown the door. Even more sad than that is the biblical conclusion in terms of the possibility of their salvation. Individuals who are characterized by the *practice* of *impurity*, Paul says, are beyond being reached by the message or messengers of salvation. Lest you think this is an isolated interpretation or a skewed biblical text, Jesus said in this regard elsewhere: “*Do not throw your pearls before swine*” (Matthew 7:6). And again, three times Romans chapter 1 states regarding such individuals, *And God gave them over*.

Beloved, it is your biblical responsibility, and it is in your keeping in obedience to God that you identify such corruption and act appropriately! You should be witnessing to some in D.C. who have been elected to office, and you should be working to remove some because they are so far gone, beyond remedy, as identified by their *greedy involvement with things impure*. Cleansing D.C. is a good idea, don’t you think?

## VI. SUMMARY

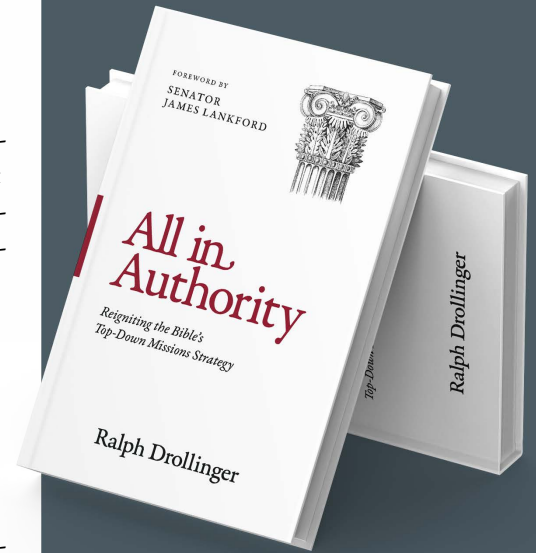
Seeing the downward progression of these four aforementioned horrible characteristics of unbelief is not difficult. I see at least three conclusive takeaways from this passage relative to public servants. The examples follow.

### A. REJECTING JESUS CHRIST LEADS TO TERRIBLE BEHAVIOR AND PRACTICE

These characteristics—and a person’s progression toward degeneration—are true of every unbeliever. Billy Graham used to reflect the truths of this Ephesian letter passage when in his evangelistic sermons he would say, “You may never get this opportunity again to profess your faith in Christ. Today is the day of salvation! Come forward!!” Certainly, not every unregenerate individual is so far along in this identified progression of sinful hardening that attests to the restraining work of the Holy Spirit—or again, what is referred to theologically as common grace. God bestows this protective shield on both the believer and unbeliever, righteous and unrighteous (cf. Matthew 5:45), and helps to curtail and diminish the deleterious effects of the fall—the truly severely drastic realities of the fallen world in which we live.

### B. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD SERVES TO BOTH PRESERVE AND ILLUMINATE

A summary of this scorching passage would not be complete without mentioning why the world is not worse off than it is. Quite simply, it is due to the preserving and illuminating influence of believers. When the Word of God goes out, it does not return void (cf. Isaiah 55:11). It is like a tiger, which needs no defense—only unleashing!



NOW AVAILABLE

The book of Acts records how a small band of men—the apostles—in very short order *turned the world upside down* (Acts 17:6, KJV) during the first century in which they lived. This small team of uneducated, common men were not elite leaders, so how were they able to saturate the world with the gospel—changing lives, changing culture, and eventually changing the Roman Empire?

Scripture provides the answer: not only did they fulfill the Great Commission one soul at a time through a ministry of geometric evangelism and discipleship, but they succeeded *by concentrating on and impacting a particular element of society, specifically kings and all who are in authority* (1 Timothy 2:1–4).

*All in Authority: Reigniting the Bible's Top-Down Missions Strategy* provides the biblical exegesis for this missional strategy that is found in both the Old and New Testaments. The book provides a clarion call for the Church to make political public servants a priority mission field in our nation today. Request your complimentary copy at [capmin.org](http://capmin.org).



It says of itself that it is *living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword* (Hebrews 4:12). Such consistent proclamation of the Word and the making of strong disciples have an effect—like nothing in comparison—to quell the deteriorating consequences of unbelief and to illuminate darkness in the Capitol community and the culture as a whole. That is why these Bible studies disseminated throughout the offices every week are so vitally important to the health of our members and nation.

Like radiation that impedes the progression of cancer, the proclamation of the Word of God amazingly thwarts the rot and illumines the darkness of otherwise unbridled and degenerative unbelief.

### C. HOW IS YOUR WALK WITH CHRIST?

And lastly, the main point Paul is making is further signaled in his admonition at the conclusion of today's passage: *But you did not learn Christ in this way* (v. 20). This rebuke has a present applicability here in the Capitol. In other words, these degenerative, sinful traits should be far from characterizing any and all true believers! For some members who are regenerate in Christ to still vote incorrectly on biblically explicit issues<sup>4</sup> is to act in *callousness* to the perspicuous teachings of God's Holy Word!

If you are saved, you must mature in Christ to the degree that it affects both your inward thinking and outward actions, which most definitely should include the way in which you vote on moral issues (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20)! If you are saved, then show it in D.C. Courageously proclaim to others that you have *learned Christ in this way!*

1. In their book, *The Criminal Personality: A Profile for Change*, researchers Samuel Yochelson and Stanton Samenow state, "It is not the environment that turns a man into a criminal, it is a series of choices that he makes."
2. John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*. New York: Word, 1997.
3. Lyndon Azcuna, "The Porn Pandemic," October 28, 2021, LifePlan, <https://www.lifeplan.org/the-porn-pandemic/>
4. There can be honest disagreement with non-biblically-explicit issues.

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Making Disciples of Jesus Christ in the Political Arena Throughout the World



Capitol Ministries provides Bible studies, evangelism, and discipleship to political leaders. Founded in 1996, Capitol Ministries has started ongoing ministries in more than forty U.S. state capitols and dozens of foreign federal capitols.

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