

Ephesians Series

Lesson #157

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Is Fallen Man Unable to Believe? The Error of Irresistible Grace

Ephesians 4:17-19



EPHESIANS

THE WEALTH, WALK
& WARFARE
OF THE BELIEVER

Eph. 4:17, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

Eph. 4:18, “having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

Eph. 4:19, “who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” ~NKJV

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περιπατέω *peripateō*

**pres act infin (imperative infinitive)
to walk, walk around; figuratively of
a person’s way of life, lifestyle, the
way a person conducts his life**

**διάνοια *dianoia* fem sing
dat**

mind, thought, intention

σκοτόω *skotoō*

**perf pass part
masc plur nom
to darken (NIDNTT
only); blind;**

***σκοτίζω *skotizo* to
become darkened**

The Fundamental Problem

Gentiles walk in the futility of their thinking, vs. 17

Why is their thinking futile? Because their understanding is darkened, vs. 18a

Why is it darkened? Because they are alienated from the life of God, vs. 18

Why alienated from God? Because of the ignorance within them.

Why are they ignorant? Because of the stubbornness of their heart.

πώρωσις pōrōsis
fem sing nom
stubbornness

Acts 26:17, “ ‘I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,

Acts 26:18, “ ‘to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’ ”

The Lexical Problem: Blind or Hardened?

**Eph. 4:18, “having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;”
~NKJV**

πώρωσις *pōrōsis*

**fem sing acc stubbornness,
blindness**

J. Armitage Robinson was a noted Greek scholar and wrote an extended history

“In Eph. 4:18 the word πώρωσις has been uniformly interpreted as ‘blindness’ in the Latin, Syriac, and Armenian versions, and, with perhaps but one exception (Geneva 1557, ‘hardenes’)

The Latin understood it as obtuseness, moral obtuseness, which isn’t the same as hardness, so was taken as blindness rather than stubborn.”

~J. Armitage Robinson D.D., *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians: A Revised Text and Translation with Exposition and Notes*, Second Edition.

“The word conveys the idea of callus that serves as mortar (thus petrification) to reunite the surfaces of fractured bones or a pus which comes out of the bone and produces callus ... In Job 17:7 it refers to the eyes growing dim.”

~Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 588.

Re: Blindness

The physically blind are often used in Scripture as an illustration of the spiritually blind. In the Gospels, Jesus as the Messiah often healed the blind, thus showing physically that He was God and could solve the physical problem of blindness. There were those who performed false miracles, but the Jews understand that two miracles were signs of the Messiah, leprosy and blindness.

John 9:1, “Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.

John 9:2, “And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’

John 9:3, “Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.

John 9:4, “ ‘I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

John 9:5, “ ‘As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’ ”

The Theological Problem with Spiritual Blindness?

The Theological Problem with Spiritual Blindness?

“And this want of power of spiritual discernment arises from the corruption of our whole nature, by which the reason or understanding is blinded, and the taste and feelings are perverted.”

~Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2.261

- T Total Inability**
- U Unconditional Election**
- L Limited Atonement**
- I Irresistible Grace**
- P Perseverance of the Saints**

“... Because men are by nature dead in sin and are under its power. They are of themselves unable and unwilling to forsake their evil ways and to turn to Christ for mercy. Consequently, the unregenerate will not respond to the gospel call to repentance and faith. No amount of external threatenings or promises will cause blind, deaf, dead, rebellious sinners to bow before Christ as Lord and to look to Him alone for salvation.”

~David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and Roger Nicole, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended and Documented*

“Therefore, the Holy Spirit, in order to bring God’s elect to salvation, extends to them a special inward call in addition to the outward call contained in the gospel message. Through this special call, the Holy Spirit performs a work of grace within the sinner which inevitably brings him to faith in Christ. The inward change wrought in the elect sinner enables him to understand and believe spiritual truth; in the spiritual realm he is given the seeing eye and the hearing ear. The Spirit creates within him a new heart or a new nature. This is accomplished through regeneration or the new birth by which the sinner is made a child of God and is given spiritual life.”

~David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and Roger Nicole, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended and Documented*

- 1. In addition to the outward call or presentation of the gospel, there is a special inward call.**

The doctrine of Irresistible or Efficacious Grace is set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith in the following words. “All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.”

Understood in Irresistible Grace:

Blindness is a constitutional defect, that is, spiritually blind and spiritually dead people cannot see, hear, or believe the gospel because of the Fall. God will irresistibly draw the elect, give them saving faith, and they will necessarily persevere as evidence of their salvation.

However,

John 5:25, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.”

Rom. 1:20, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Rom. 1:21, “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

σκοτίζω *skotizō* 3 sing aor pass indic to darken

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διαλογισμός *dialogismos* masc plur dat thought, opinion, reasoning, consideration, argument; discussion

- 1. They know God through the non-verbal revelation and evidence of creation, the universe, all that they see bears the copyright of God's creation.**
- 2. They know God, but they are responsible for not glorifying Him.**
- 3. The result is their souls are darkened, blacked out, because they refuse to be enlightened.**
- 4. This is a historical description of the progression of human depravity and the divine punishment which comes.**

Key Passages:

Matt. 13:19, “When anyone hears the message of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.”

Mark 4:15, “And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.”

Luke 8:12, “Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest [in order that] they should not believe and be saved.”

2 Cor. 4:1, “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.

2 Cor. 4:2, “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

2 Cor. 4:3, “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

2 Cor. 4:4, “whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

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Rom. 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Rom. 1:19, “because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

Rom. 1:20, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Rom. 1:21, “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

John 6:44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:45, “It is written in the prophets, ‘*And they shall all be taught by God.*’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”

Acts 16:19, “But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.”

Acts 21:30, “And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.”

James 2:6, “But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?”

John 21:6, “And He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’ So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.”

John 21:11, “Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.”

John 6:44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:45, “It is written in the prophets, ‘*And they shall all be taught by God.*’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”

Isa. 54:13, “All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children.”

John 16:7, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

John 16:8, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

John 16:9, “of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

John 16:10, “of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;

John 16:11, “of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”