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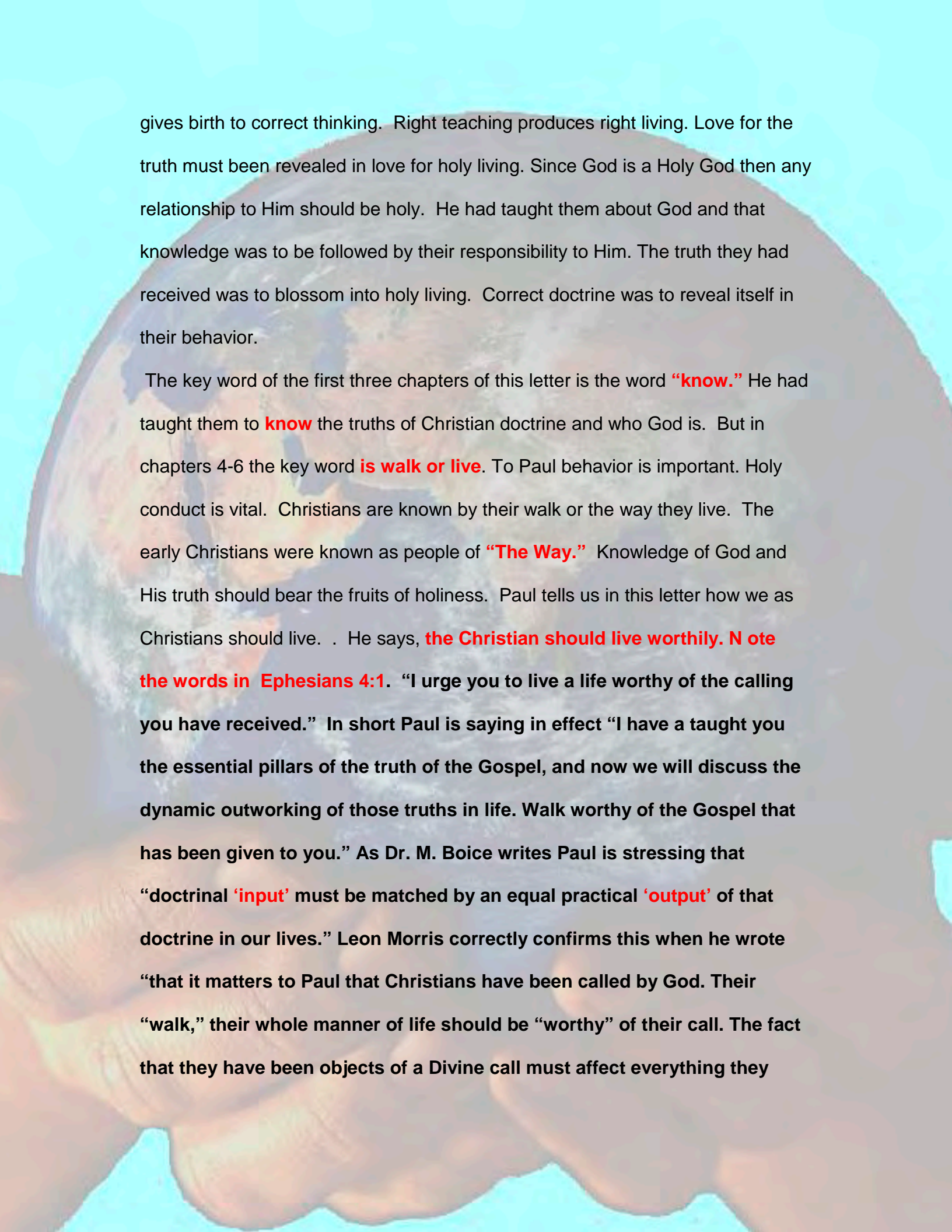
SEPTEMBER 2011

LIVE WORTHILY

Scripture Reading - Ephesians 4:1-3, 17-32.

Introduction

Up to this point in his letter to the Ephesians church, Paul has dealt with the basic truths of the Gospel. The first three chapters could be considered the doctrinal section of his message. Fundamental gospel truths are his concern. One has commented that as he commenced to write this fourth chapter, he seemed to be like a man sitting at the controls of a powerful spotlight.” He had discussed details that had led to the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, and had explained how men and women could be reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He described the purpose of God to create a body of people he called the church. But now he turns the spotlight direct on the Christians in Asia and how they should conduct their behavior. “They had come to see God as He had been and as He still was.” and now Paul teaches them what they should be, and how they should act and think. This knowledge was designed to influence their conduct. Correct doctrine



gives birth to correct thinking. Right teaching produces right living. Love for the truth must be revealed in love for holy living. Since God is a Holy God then any relationship to Him should be holy. He had taught them about God and that knowledge was to be followed by their responsibility to Him. The truth they had received was to blossom into holy living. Correct doctrine was to reveal itself in their behavior.

The key word of the first three chapters of this letter is the word **“know.”** He had taught them to **know** the truths of Christian doctrine and who God is. But in chapters 4-6 the key word **is walk or live.** To Paul behavior is important. Holy conduct is vital. Christians are known by their walk or the way they live. The early Christians were known as people of **“The Way.”** Knowledge of God and His truth should bear the fruits of holiness. Paul tells us in this letter how we as Christians should live. . He says, **the Christian should live worthily. Note the words in Ephesians 4:1.** **“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”** In short Paul is saying in effect **“I have taught you the essential pillars of the truth of the Gospel, and now we will discuss the dynamic outworking of those truths in life. Walk worthy of the Gospel that has been given to you.”** As Dr. M. Boice writes Paul is stressing that **“doctrinal ‘input’ must be matched by an equal practical ‘output’ of that doctrine in our lives.”** Leon Morris correctly confirms this when he wrote **“that it matters to Paul that Christians have been called by God. Their “walk,” their whole manner of life should be “worthy” of their call. The fact that they have been objects of a Divine call must affect everything they**

do.....He sees the Divine call as an incentive and the standard for Christian living. This call puts Christian living on the highest plane.”

“They must walk worthily of the calling they have received.” Ephesians 4:1.

In our day I think I would be correct to conclude that this challenge is not considered to be of top priority. So I often hear the excuse “I am only human, how can I live what the Bible expects of us.” **Our frail humanity is used**

to excuse our bad behavior and that is an extremely lame excuse. When we do that, what we are really saying, by implication, is that we do not believe that the grace of God and the power of His Spirit cannot empower us to live worthily of the call of Christ who died to save us. If this is true then His death and resurrection were a waste of time, and so it is thought that Paul expects too much here. There are two truths that address this mindset and are a pre-requisite to living worthy of our calling as Christians. **Note will you,**

i. The Possibility of living a life that is worthy of the calling we have received. It is not the impossible dream. The fact that the Apostle Paul urges us to live this way confirms this. **Secondly,**

ii. The Power to live this life is guaranteed. While it is true that each of us should deliberately choose this way of life, it is only possible to live the holy life with the help of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. This is vital for Jesus made clear that without Him His followers could do nothing. Paul was aware that the Christians live in an evil society and that there is a real danger that they might not measure up to the standards “of moral and spiritual excellence demanded by their faith.” The Gentiles believed and worshipped idols but they

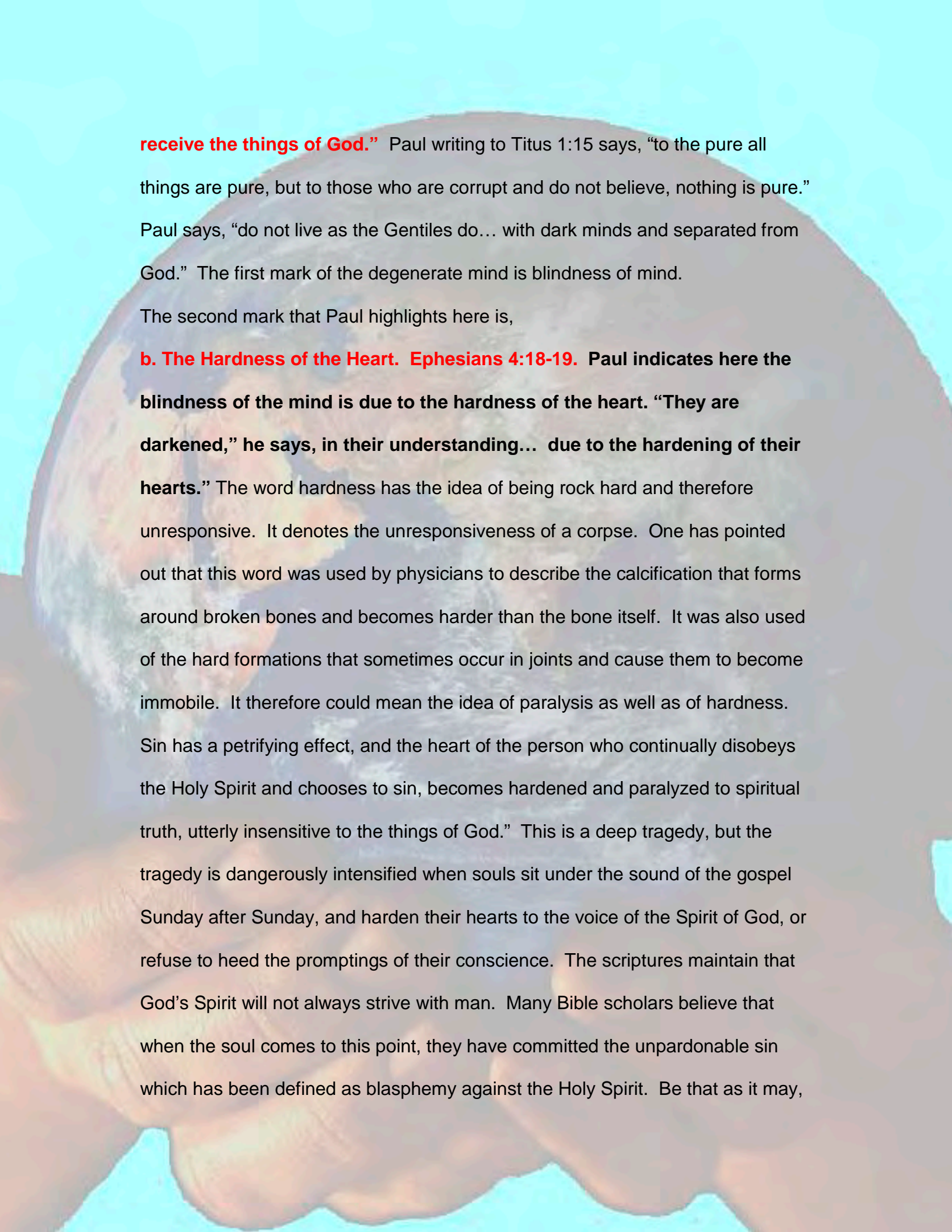
lied and acted as they pleased. **Christians, however, testified to being servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose commandments they obeyed, and it was vital that their conduct should confirm, and not contradict that testimony. What we do should measure up to what we say.** That is why Paul urges us to live the life worthy of the calling we have received. He is concerned that the Christians should live differently to the life they used to live. In fact Paul feels so strongly about it he says in verse 17. **“I insist on it.”** And to make his point, Paul describes the old way of living. He reminds them of

1. THE DEGENERATE CONDITION OF THE SINNER IN THE WORLD. Ephesians 4:17-18.

“Do not live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. And Paul describe the characteristics of this spiritual and moral condition. The first mark of the degenerate life is,

a. The Blindness of the Mind, or the darkness of the intellect. Ephesians 4:17-18. “Do not live as the Gentiles do...they are darkened in their understanding, and they are separated from the life of God...” John

MacArthur points out that “the basic issue of life-style centers in the mind. Paul speaks of understanding and ignorance (v.18) learning and teaching (vv. 22-21). And the mind and the truth(23-24) - all of which are related to intellect. Because unbelievers and Christians think differently, they are therefore to act differently. As far as spiritual and moral issues are concerned, an unbeliever cannot think straight. In areas of moral and spiritual values the unregenerate (unsaved) mind is both warped and blind. The Bible tells us that the **“natural man does not**



receive the things of God.” Paul writing to Titus 1:15 says, “to the pure all things are pure, but to those who are corrupt and do not believe, nothing is pure.” Paul says, “do not live as the Gentiles do... with dark minds and separated from God.” The first mark of the degenerate mind is blindness of mind.

The second mark that Paul highlights here is,

b. The Hardness of the Heart. Ephesians 4:18-19. Paul indicates here the **blindness of the mind is due to the hardness of the heart.** “They are

darkened,” he says, in their understanding... due to the hardening of their hearts.” The word hardness has the idea of being rock hard and therefore

unresponsive. It denotes the unresponsiveness of a corpse. One has pointed out that this word was used by physicians to describe the calcification that forms around broken bones and becomes harder than the bone itself. It was also used of the hard formations that sometimes occur in joints and cause them to become immobile. It therefore could mean the idea of paralysis as well as of hardness.

Sin has a petrifying effect, and the heart of the person who continually disobeys the Holy Spirit and chooses to sin, becomes hardened and paralyzed to spiritual truth, utterly insensitive to the things of God.” This is a deep tragedy, but the tragedy is dangerously intensified when souls sit under the sound of the gospel Sunday after Sunday, and harden their hearts to the voice of the Spirit of God, or refuse to heed the promptings of their conscience. The scriptures maintain that God’s Spirit will not always strive with man. Many Bible scholars believe that when the soul comes to this point, they have committed the unpardonable sin which has been defined as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Be that as it may,

it is an extremely dangerous point at which to arrive. Hardness is a mark of the degenerate heart. Another mark of the degenerate heart is,

c. The Recklessness of Desire. Ephesians 4:19. Note what Paul says in verse 19. **“Having lost all insensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity with continual lust for more.”** The hardened heart produces an insensitivity that results in lustfulness of desire. Paul describes the degenerate person of lacking in sensitivity, and this really means ceasing to feel any pain they are inwardly dead and inwardly blind. And what Paul is saying, is that when this happens there will be no restraint in the illegitimate exercise of legitimate bodily appetites, and no longer will moral sensual perversion prick their conscience. They have lost all sensitivity to it. Leon Morris points out, that Paul is speaking about the person who is concerned only with the gratification of his or her own desires. It is the philosophy that maintains if it feels good then do it. It follows that Men and women will do what is right in their own eyes with out reference to absolute values. Conscience does not play a part in their lives and their lusts control their lifestyle. I do recognize that to challenge this lifestyle in our permissive society is not popular and may even be dangerous. While Hollywood may preach the gospel of free, moral perverted lifestyles in our society, Paul says to us Christians, “you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, but live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” Paul would never say “if it feels good then do it.” What Paul does say in verse 17, “I tell you this, and **insist on it in the Lord**, that you must no longer live as

the gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.” Futility, is how Paul labels their thought patterns. He urgently instructs them “Live a life worthy of the calling they have received.” Ephesians 4:1. Do not allow yourself to live the degenerate life. But Paul moves on to tell us that the life lived worthy of our calling must give evidence of

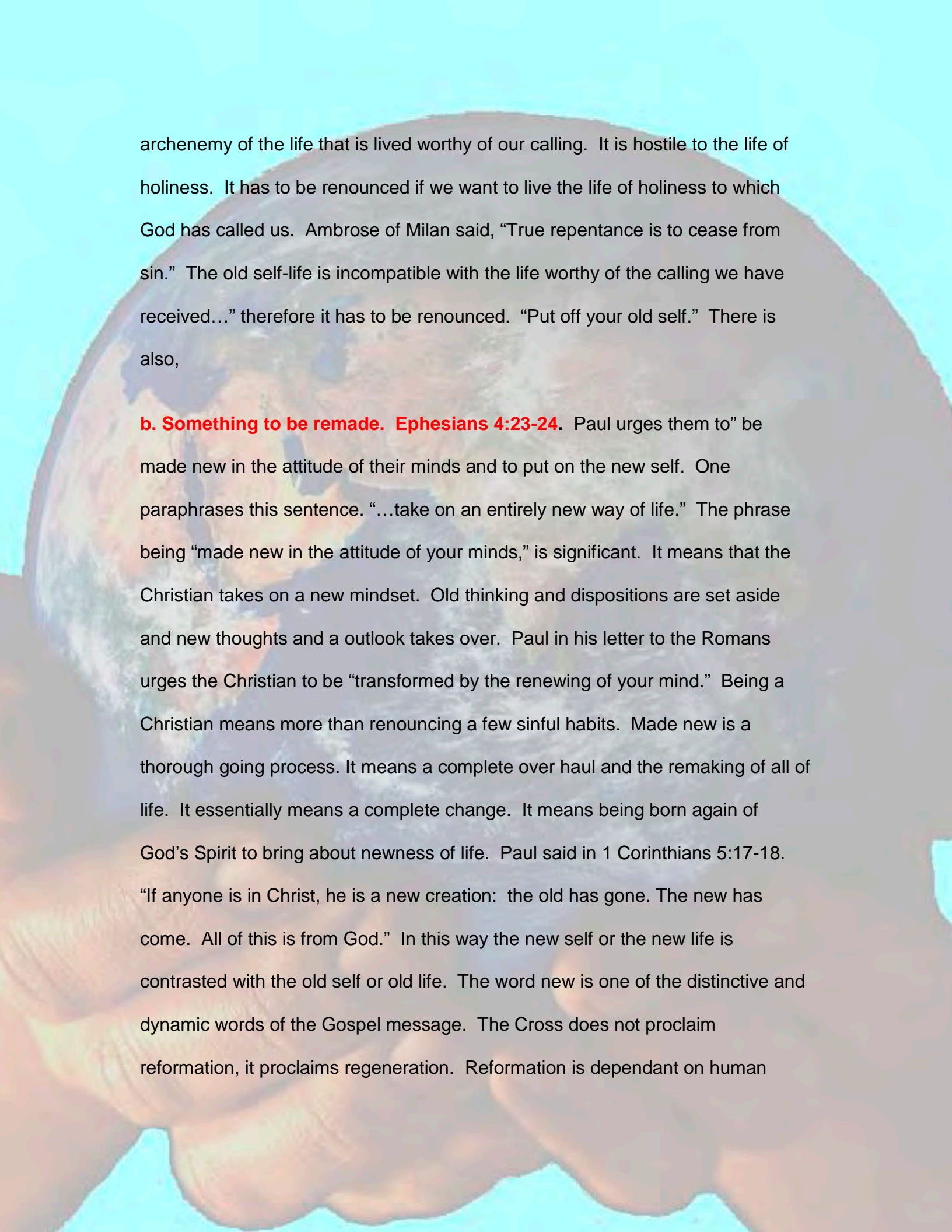
2. A DEFINITE CONTRAST TO THAT OF THE WORLD. Ephesians 4:22-24.

“You were taught,” he says, “with regard to former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitudes of your minds, and to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” There is no mistaking what Paul is saying here. Very simply stated he says there must a be difference in the lifestyle of the Christian to that of the world. He states clearly that if there is to be a definite contrast in the Christian with that of the old life, then there is,

a. Something to be renounced. This vital if we are to live a holy life.

Ephesians 4:22. “.Put off the old self which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires....” He does not say live with the corrupted self or tolerate it. He certainly does Not say suppress it or accommodate it. His words are clear and concise – **There is no place for compromise “put it off...”** Have done with it!!

The Ephesians had come to know the truth, as it is in Jesus. Paul says it in verse 21. “Surely you have heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus,” and again in verse 22 he says, “you were taught, with regard to your former life, to put off your old self.” The old sinful self is the



archenemy of the life that is lived worthy of our calling. It is hostile to the life of holiness. It has to be renounced if we want to live the life of holiness to which God has called us. Ambrose of Milan said, "True repentance is to cease from sin." The old self-life is incompatible with the life worthy of the calling we have received..." therefore it has to be renounced. "Put off your old self." There is also,

b. Something to be remade. Ephesians 4:23-24. Paul urges them to" be made new in the attitude of their minds and to put on the new self. One paraphrases this sentence. "...take on an entirely new way of life." The phrase being "made new in the attitude of your minds," is significant. It means that the Christian takes on a new mindset. Old thinking and dispositions are set aside and new thoughts and a outlook takes over. Paul in his letter to the Romans urges the Christian to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." Being a Christian means more than renouncing a few sinful habits. Made new is a thorough going process. It means a complete over haul and the remaking of all of life. It essentially means a complete change. It means being born again of God's Spirit to bring about newness of life. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:17-18. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone. The new has come. All of this is from God." In this way the new self or the new life is contrasted with the old self or old life. The word new is one of the distinctive and dynamic words of the Gospel message. The Cross does not proclaim reformation, it proclaims regeneration. Reformation is dependant on human

power and energy, whereas regeneration is dependent on Divine power, because it is the result of an act of God the Holy Spirit. He transforms the life of a repentant sinner. The old way of living or the old self-life goes, and a new way of life or the new self is introduced and a soul is born again. Put off the old self and put on the new self.

So it is clear that if the Child of God is going to live a life worthy of his or her calling there must be a definite change or contrast in his or her lifestyle. Finally to live a life worthy of the calling you have received you must reveal,

3. A DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER. Ephesians 4:22-31.

Paul in verses 23-24 urges us to be made new in the attitude of our minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Note will you that we are not to be created to be God, or to be little gods There is a frightening heresy that is being propounded in some of the so called evangelical circles today that we can become little gods. Paul says, we are being created to be like God, not in absolute deity, but in verse 24 he explains that we are “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Paul points out two important things here, first he highlights

a. The Basis of this Distinctive Character in the Christian. Ephesians 4:24.

The basis of this distinctive character in the child of God is summed up in the phrase “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” J.B. Philips in his paraphrase of the New Testament urges us “to put the fresh clothes of the new life which were made by God’s design

for righteousness, and holiness which is no allusion.” This is not a new thought in the mind of the Apostle Paul. In Ephesians 1:4 he writes that God “chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.’ And in Romans 8:29, he writes that has predestined us to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.” We are to be “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” The central thought here is “to be free from the contamination of sin. It is the life purified from all unrighteousness by the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:9. And to be holy is to be Christ like. The basis of this distinctive character is to be “created to be like God in true “righteousness and holiness.” And so it is clear that we are to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Note secondly,

b.The Purpose of this Distinctive Character in the Christian. Ephesians

4:23-32. The Nature of our character will determine the nature of our conduct.

Character is not only the foundation of our conduct; it is the fountain of our actions. Jesus said what is in a man comes out of a man. What a man is determines what he does. The Bible says, “As a man thinks in his heart so is he.” Jesus made abundantly clear, that a bad tree produces bad fruit and a good tree produces good fruit. Tozer said, “If we would do holy deeds we must be holy men.” The new man lives a new life – a life created to be “like God in true righteousness and holiness.” This is the lifestyle that defines a Christian. In the very next chapter Paul writes to the Christians, “you were once darkness but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.” To

walk worthily as a Christian involves a radical change in

i. Character or what we are.

ii. Conduct or what we do.

iii. In Conversation or what we say.

There must be,

i. Radical change in character. We are “created to be like God in true righteousness. This we have already emphasized. Then there must be

ii. Radical Change in Conduct. Because we have put off the old self and put on the new self Paul says in Ephesians 4: 25, “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor.” You have put on the new self you must “THEREFORE” put off evil conduct. The words “put off are in the imperative.” Which means it must be done if we are to walk worthily as a Christian. Note some of things we are to discard.

I. Put off Lying. Ephesians 4;25. “Put off falsehood and speak truthful to your neighbor.” Lying and dishonesty were commonplace in Paul’s day. One has pointed out that that in some cultures “deception was considered justified, if it brought prosperity.” The commandment “you shall not bear false testimony against your neighbor,” Exodus 20:16. was part of an ancient ritual; it was remembered in the temple, but forgotten on the streets. But to Paul it was on the streets, “in the very day living is were it should be remembered. Honesty in all things is a mark of living the life that is worthy of our calling. The fact that unbelievers told lies and lived that way, made it imperative that Christians should

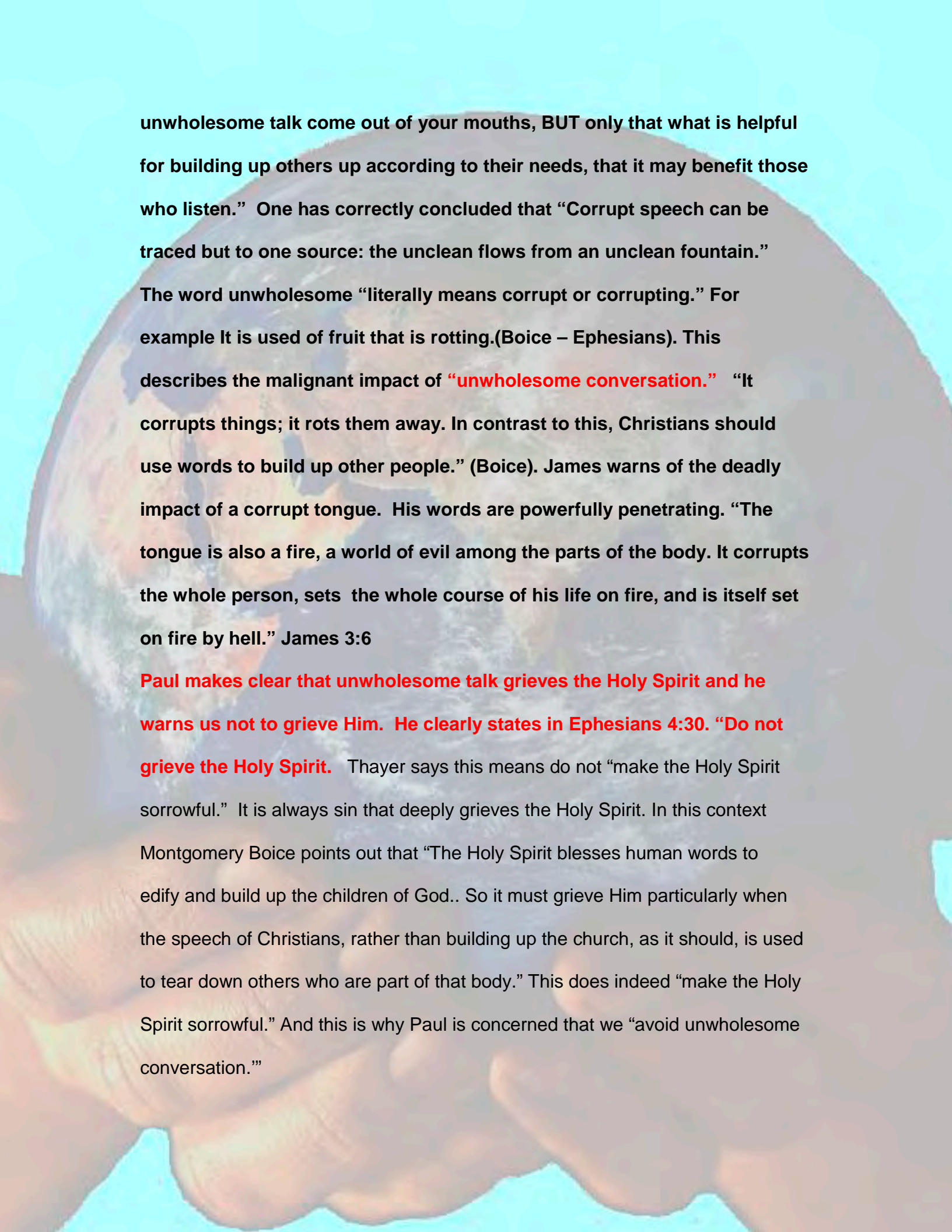
be truthful and live truthfully.

11. Put off Sinful Anger. Ephesians 4:26. "In your anger do not sin."

Anger in itself is not necessarily sin. God is angry at sin. Jesus was angry at the hard-heartedness of the Pharisees. There is an anger that is not sinful. But the anger that is self-centered, a smoldering resentment, hidden malice and bad temper is sinful." One has written that "we sin in anger when its root is self, when our anger is directed not so much against sin as the sinner, and because of a personal hurt, rather than for the sake of Christ's glory and the honor of His Name". One has said that to be angry and sin not, we must "live to be angry at nothing but sin." To live worthily the holy life, does not make place or allow for the smoldering fires of revenge and vindictiveness. And if there is any anger at all do not allow the sun to set on your anger. Do not let your anger give a foothold to Satan. Put off sinful anger.

III. Put Off Dishonesty. Ephesians 4:28. "He who has been stealing must no longer steal." Stealing is incompatible with the life worthy of the calling we have received. There is a defining conduct in the life of holiness, a place where the line is drawn in the sand. "If we call ourselves Christians let us at least live like Christians" so as to glorify Christ. When we put off the old self and put on the new self there will be a radical change in character.

IV. Put off unwholesome conversation. Ephesians 4:29. "Do not let any



unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, BUT only that what is helpful for building up others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” One has correctly concluded that “Corrupt speech can be traced but to one source: the unclean flows from an unclean fountain.” The word unwholesome “literally means corrupt or corrupting.” For example It is used of fruit that is rotting.(Boice – Ephesians). This describes the malignant impact of **“unwholesome conversation.”** “It corrupts things; it rots them away. In contrast to this, Christians should use words to build up other people.” (Boice). James warns of the deadly impact of a corrupt tongue. His words are powerfully penetrating. “The tongue is also a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.” James 3:6

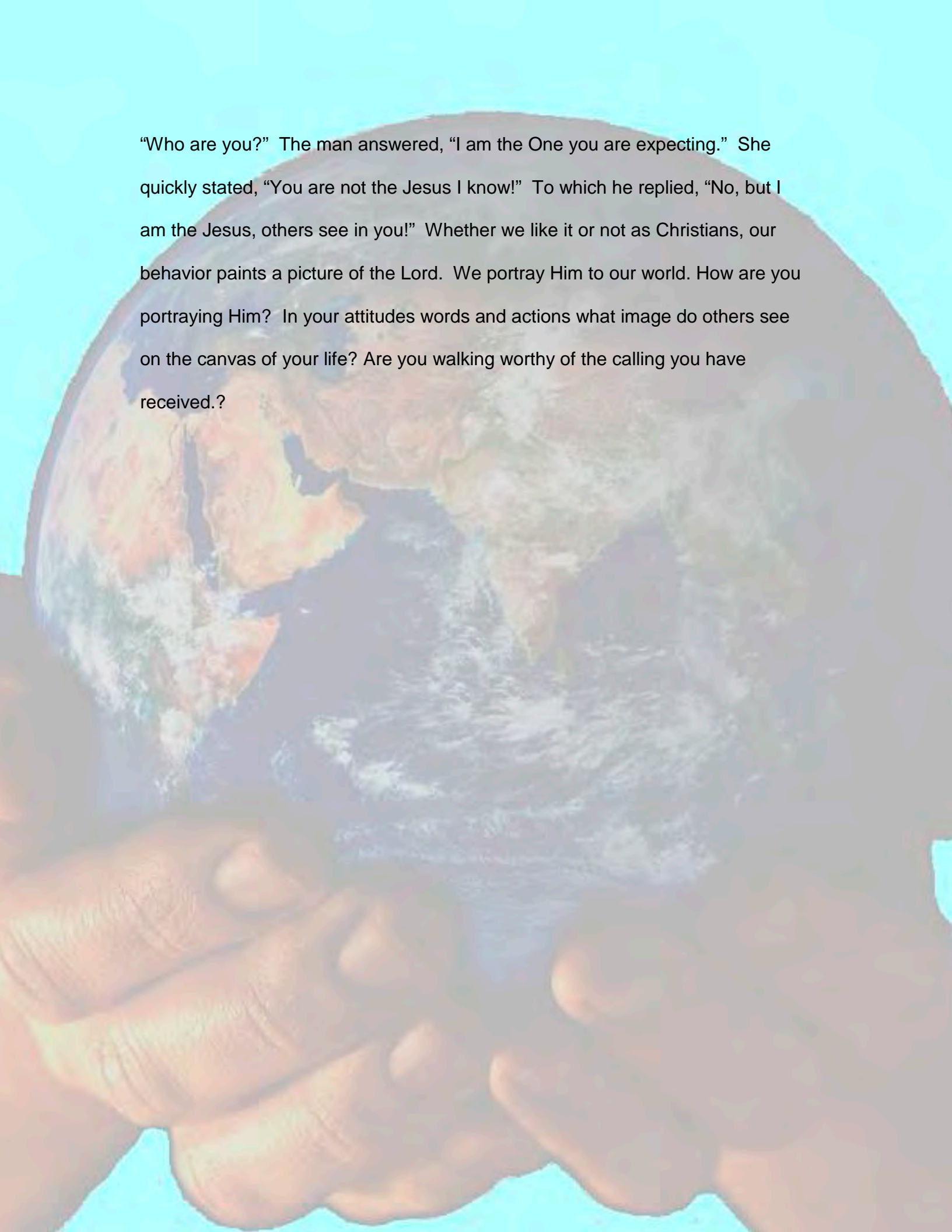
Paul makes clear that unwholesome talk grieves the Holy Spirit and he warns us not to grieve Him. He clearly states in Ephesians 4:30. “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Thayer says this means do not “make the Holy Spirit sorrowful.” It is always sin that deeply grieves the Holy Spirit. In this context Montgomery Boice points out that “The Holy Spirit blesses human words to edify and build up the children of God.. So it must grieve Him particularly when the speech of Christians, rather than building up the church, as it should, is used to tear down others who are part of that body.” This does indeed “make the Holy Spirit sorrowful.” And this is why Paul is concerned that we “avoid unwholesome conversation.””

Paul also urges us to

V. Put Off Carnal Attitudes. Ephesians 4:31-32. “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling along with every form of malice.” These are the marks of the old self. Paul goes on “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as Christ forgave you.” These are the marks of the new self. Our conduct as Christians should always align with the Biblical standards for a holy life. Jesus said “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”. Matthew 5:16. Holy conduct is clear evidence that the grace and power of the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives, and will always bring glory and praise to our Lord. That is why Paul insists that we no longer live as the non-Christian lives, but live a life that is worthy to the life we have been called.

Conclusion

Living the life that is worthy of the calling we have received is the Christ like life for holiness in essence is Christ likeness. A Christian woman experienced a most unusual dream. While sleeping, she dreamed that Christ was coming the next day at 4.00 p.m. Her dream then carried her through a time warp to the coming day. On the day of her Lord’s expected arrival, she feverishly worked to clean and prepare her house. At four o’clock, she heard a knock at the door. Quickly, the woman examined her appearance in the mirror, and then walked swiftly to the door. In shock and horror, she saw a grotesque, dirty figure standing on the other side of the threshold. She feared this emaciated and disheveled individual would ruin her visit with Christ so she rudely demanded,

A pair of hands, one light-skinned and one dark-skinned, are shown holding a globe of the Earth. The hands are positioned at the bottom and sides of the globe, with fingers gently gripping it. The globe shows the continents of North and South America in shades of brown and orange, with blue oceans and white clouds. The background is a soft, light blue gradient.

“Who are you?” The man answered, “I am the One you are expecting.” She quickly stated, “You are not the Jesus I know!” To which he replied, “No, but I am the Jesus, others see in you!” Whether we like it or not as Christians, our behavior paints a picture of the Lord. We portray Him to our world. How are you portraying Him? In your attitudes words and actions what image do others see on the canvas of your life? Are you walking worthy of the calling you have received.?