

ESSENTIAL TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL

The Foundations of Our Faith

Discussion Guide
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Sermon Title **When the Bible Conflicts With Culture** by Paul Martin

Ephesians 4: 17-32; Colossians 3: 1-11

Introduction: In this short series we are considering how to respond when we find the Bible in conflict with science, culture, and authority. In this study we will look specifically at conflicts that arise between the Bible and our culture in the United States.

Sermon Outline

- I. **Narcissistic Hedonism and Biological/Behavioral Determinism Rules our Culture**
 - A. Narcissistic Hedonism defined:
 1. Narcissism— behavior which involves exclusive self-absorption, exceptional interest in and admiration for oneself, having an inflated idea of one's own importance.
 2. Hedonism— a school of philosophy which argues that pleasure has an ultimate importance and is the most important pursuit of humanity; devoted to pleasure
 3. Narcissistic Hedonism: a self absorbed outlook on life that is devoted to the pursuit of personal pleasure and gratification as the primary goal of one's existence.
 - B. Biological/Behavioral Determinism Defined:
 1. Biological determinism—the philosophy or belief that human behavior and social organization are fundamentally determined by innate biological characteristics, so that differences in behavior within or between groups are attributed to genetic variation rather than influences of environment and learning.
 2. Behaviorism— A psychological theory that claims all mental states can be reduced to statements of observable behaviors. In learning theory, the claim is all learning is based on a stimulus-response relationship.
 3. Although these schools of thought appear to be ultimately opposed, they find a useful synthesis in our culture for explaining behavior in terms other than personal responsibility. Bad behavior and poor life choices are blamed alternately, or concomitantly on genetic predisposition and environmental influence (poor parenting, abuse, poverty, etc.)
- II. **Medical/Psychological Model of Bad Behavior**
 - A. If our genes and our environment are responsible for our problems, then we do not bear personal responsibility. We are not “bad” people, we are “sick” people and we need medical treatment. Treatments include:
 1. Psychotropic medication
 2. Psychotherapy
 3. Christian counseling movement is a response to this influence
 - B. If we are genetically disposed to certain behaviors, they may be normal variants which are legitimate expressions of the fullness of humanity: homosexuality becomes a normal, genetic variant.
- III. **Hedonism as a Way of Life**
 - A. We are encouraged to look out for ourselves and to pamper ourselves in terms of personal wants and desires as an inherent “right”
 - B. We have come to expect a standard of living well beyond most of the rest of the world, and Christians have come to expect that God is supposed to support this standard as a measure of His blessing and approval.
 - C. Biblical teaching regarding death to self, personal sacrifice for an eternal goal, and full responsibility for one's behavior becomes obsolete and antiquated as a simplistic and uninformed view of life.

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, 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; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. ²⁰ But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

(Continued on Page 2)
Ephesians 4:17-24
(NASB)

Conclusion: But where sin abounds, Grace did much more abound!

Knowledge results in arrogance; the goal of our instruction is love.

Discussion Questions

1.) Name some emotional/behavioral problems that you have heard, or believed to be genetically based or a sickness.

2.) Does the Bible address these issues and does It offer any hope or answers?

3.) Can you explain the difference between feelings, inclinations, and choices and behavior?

4.) Do you believe it is sin to have feelings, inclinations, or tendencies in a direction contrary to Biblical teaching? Explain your answer.

25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. 26 BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity. 28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4: 25-32 (NASB)

5.) In terms of behavior, what does God hold us responsible and accountable for?

6.) How does one reconcile the need for self care (physically, mentally, and emotionally) and the call to “take up one’s cross and die daily”?

7.) When medical science comes out with new proof that something you always thought was sin is now understood to be a chemical imbalance or genetic problem, what will be your response?

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. ⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ⁶ For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, ¹⁰ and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him-- ¹¹ a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

Colossians 3: 1-11 (NASB)

God’s Vision and Mission for the Alliance Bible Church

The Alliance Bible Church is a multi-cultural church celebrating the life of Christ in us by:

- Proclaiming the full message of God’s Good News to the diverse cultures of McHenry and surrounding communities,
- Discipling believers in living the deeper Christian life,
- Equipping His people for the work of ministry, and
- Demonstrating the unconditional love of Jesus to our community through meaningful acts of service.

