

Ephesians 5: 1-21 "Formerly Dead People Walking In Light"

Today, as you know, we're going to be looking at Ephesians 5:1-21. This text is very directly about some of the "how to's" of being a Christian. In the last while we've seen a progression of very big ideas about God and salvation, but this week's text brings it down to a day to day, week to week level, in many ways.

Let's quickly review where we've been...just a key verse from each chapter.

In **Ephesians 1** we saw in verse 3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, **4** even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him."---**discuss briefly**

Following that, in **Ephesians 2** we read that "{by} grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast"--**discuss briefly**

Then, in **Ephesians 3** we saw "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, **9** and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things"--**discuss briefly**

Finally, in **Ephesians 4** "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, **14** so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."--**discuss briefly**

As we can hopefully see here, the book starts out like a wide funnel, with huge ideas about God, but then slowly narrows the focus down to individual people that are 'in Christ'. That's really the focus for Paul—what does it mean to be "IN HIM"?

Along those lines, of perspective, let's try an experiment. Please play along. Put your hand right up close to your face (I know, we're breaking the laws about Covid) with your eyes open. Get as close as you can and still be able to see your skin. We know that the parts of the hand are there, but we can't see them. Now slowly pull your hand away until it becomes clear and focussed. That sort of describes our day to day lives. We get so focussed on the day to day that it gets blurry and we lose sight of the glory and majesty and power and size of God. When our hand is far away and in focus that's like stepping back from the day to day grind and seeing the big picture. However, we obviously need to do the day to day part of our walk, which is what Paul is showing us in chapter 5. It's important though that we don't lose the context, or the big picture. Especially lately, it's easy to forget that God is not surprised by what's happening, and He's in control.

Off the top, an interesting grammatical idea about this passage is that there's 4 "therforees", 2 "buts", 3 "ands" and 4 "fors"....that indicates a lot of connections and places where Paul lays out cause and effect or statements that go together. This is part of the idea of this being sort of practical directions about our walk

5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.--All of the ideas from Ephesian 1-4 lead us to this point, the narrow part of the funnel, and Paul knows that we need an example to follow—the last verse of chapter 4 was regarding forgiveness—God is forgiving, merciful, just, loving, , wise, compassionate, understanding, equitable, kind, etc, etc, etc.....we should be childlike in how we try to copy Jesus' example and follow Him....this also leads us sacrificially to our own "cross" too—thankfully he showed us how to lay down our life for others, also....

2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.--there's been a lot more walking (and biking etc) going on lately, so we should all understand the slower pace of transportation that Paul referenced, plus the idea that being a Christian implies movement, via sanctification, even if it's slow and steady growth. Also this verse shows us that Jesus did not ask our permission, nor does he need ours for his amazing sacrifice so famously stated in John 3:16-- "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Verse 2 also shows part of the mystery that Jesus *sacrificed himself as an offering to himself as God.*

3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Paul then proceeds to outline God's plan for our physical identity through our sexuality. You may wonder why this is first. This is partially because our body is our "earthly home" and we tend to make an idol of our physicality, whether it's that we're too tall, or too short, too heavy, or too thin, too many curls, or hair too straight, and this lately has certainly spilled over in to gender related issues, and even skin colour. We have also seen this concept of image as idolatry in famous stories like Narcissus, Snow White and her mirror, and the perils of Snap Chat and IG and the mental health issues associated with social media based on image. The bottom line is that we are made in the image of God, and he clearly outlined that right at the start of his word. It's not up for debate, nor should we obsess about own "image". In Genesis 1:27 we also see that {God} created man in his own image\in the image of God he created him\male and female he created them. And then in Genesis 3 we see that "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Part of our walk with Christ is trying to be pure and proper, as people that are set apart as saints in his kingdom. God planned for our sexual purity, and bodily image to be based on his plans, not ours.

4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. Paul then discusses our words, which reflects Proverbs 8, among many other scriptures:

"To you, O men, I call,
and my cry is to the children of man.
5 O simple ones, learn prudence;
O fools, learn sense.
6 Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is right,
7 for my mouth will utter truth;
wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
8 All the words of my mouth are righteous;
there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

Today it's really easy to fire off words everywhere, but that is causing so much trouble and misunderstanding. Furthermore, the words we hear in music, and other entertainment do not pass the proverbs, nor Ephesians, test.

5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. The "for you may be sure of this" refocuses us in our walk. Everyone means every—unrepentant—one—we are not given a license to deliberately sin, even though we're

forgiven—Paul again refers to the covetous nature of our physicality—our walk should be leading us towards God's kingdom, but it's on his timeless terms, not "21st C values"

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. It's pretty easy to be deceived in this era of mis—and dis-information. I heard in mid-March that in the midst of the pandemic, we were also experiencing an INFO-demic. We're overwhelmed with information. If we look at our world, like Paul did, we need a trustworthy and timeless source of wisdom. That is God's word, of course. Moral relativism has confused people with its "anything goes" sort of language. Paul says that those things lead to God's wrath upon the sons of disobedience, which is our state in Adam, without Jesus. And as we saw, Paul is writing to those that are IN CHRIST. Another place I saw this was in 2 Chronicles 13:7 where some men were described as "worthless scoundrels". We don't want a lack of discretion in our daily lives to lead to us being branded "worthless scoundrels" for all of eternity. That's much worse than a sketchy digital footprint.

7 Therefore do not become partners with them; --Paul suggests something about association—he's referring to people that are directly opposed to the gospel—if they "know" the truth, and work against it, we are to disassociate from them—not easy when it's friends and family. You've likely heard that placing a good apple into a barrel of rotten apples does not make the rotten ones good—obviously we are to share Jesus as best as possible, but Paul tells us to walk away, at some point.

8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light We did not DO dark things, but rather we WERE darkness. This goes back to the incredible gift of grace in Eph 2. We are also joined to Jesus in light as we saw in John 1 where "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), --we are to bear fruit, and that requires light—the light of the Lord also shines through all of the evil and darkness of the world—it's not enough for us to *feel* like we want to make things better—it requires God's light to make it "grow" or happen.

10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Wow—this is a lifetime of work. First of all, it's in the Bible. Secondly, Jesus himself told us and modelled it. Thirdly, it's not easy. It requires a lifetime of constant re-evaluation. Thankfully we have a shepherd to guide us, and His example to try and copy.

11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. The unfruitful works of darkness could refer to any number of things—take your pick—relationally we need to do our best to shine God's light whenever we can. This could be words (or silence), or actions (or being still), or prayer (of course!) or any number of other things.

12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. The cross removed our shame. We should not dwell on the shameful things of ourselves or others, but a small dose is left behind to keep us humble.

13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14 for anything that becomes visible is light. --Again, God's light brings sin and darkness out into the open and helps us proceed through the daily grind of life.

Therefore it says,

**"Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."**

This also hearkens back to Eph 2, and the "but God" that I spoke of a few weeks ago. He brings us out of our sleep and makes us awake and new in Him.

15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, For someone “walking through life” this is pretty self-evident. Paul says, watch where you’re going, don’t be stupid, listen to God’s instructions. The turmoil we’re experiencing now is truly related to what happened to society about 60 years ago, when people began to remove God from school and government and other places. We see this in Romans 1-- “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. **29** They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, **30** slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, **31** foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. **32** Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”. **Nothing needs to be added to this.** No wonder we’re such a mess. We have a personal and societal pride and sin problem. If it ever feels like we just can’t make sense of what’s happening in the world, it’s because every single person involved in whatever situation has a sinful pride problem. We don’t hear much about that in the analysis on the news or from politicians, do we? The problem we have is not covid, or money, or marriage, or race, or leaders, or justice, or equality, or _____—it’s sin. ”All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”. Every single person.

16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. We only have so many days—I got a text recently from an old friend congratulating me on my 50th, and it said I had been breathing for 18,285 days. Lots of them have been good, but lots were not. How should we spend our time? It seems like the days are pretty evil lately.

17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. This obviously tells us that NOT understanding God’s will IS foolishness. Pretty simple when you factor in the exclusive phrases of Jesus such as “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. **14** For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” found in Matthew 7:13-14. It’s easy to be a fool, as it comes naturally to us—some of us more easily than others, right husbands? It takes discipline and the HS to help us follow him properly.

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, --pretty practical suggestion—it does not say don't drink wine—it says don't get drunk with wine—we always like to push things, whatever our pet issues are—too much _____ fill in the blank. Instead, we should listen to the HS.

19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, I imagined what it would be like in church life if we replaced the holy grail of our opinion and independence with psalms, and hymns and making melody with your heart—notice that he says nothing about musical style, either! Just imagine (no, that is not a J Lennon allusion, either)

20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, --ALWAYS—FOR EVERYTHNG—TO GOD—wow—just live there for a bit.....repeat the verse. I recently read the famous novel *Jane Eyre* (AIR) from the 1800s for the first time. After a long series of ups and downs, Jane finds herself in a stable situation, and she said “My cottage is clean, and my furniture sufficient...All I see has made me thankful, not despondent...I am not absolutely such a fool and sensualist as to regret the absence of a carpet, a sofa, and a silver plate...five weeks ago I was an outcast, a beggar, a vagrant; now I have acquaintance, a home, a business. **I wonder at the goodness of God**...the generosity of my friends, the bounty of my lot”. We should give thanks for everything—the good and the bad.

21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Paul ends strong here—setting up the next part—day to day we need to submit to one another—wow

Perspective in our daily lives is very important. God has shown us how to try and live on a day to day basis, but we lose sight of the big picture. I heard that if Bill Gates stops to pick up a 100 bill on the floor, his loss of time in doing that actually costs him money. On the other hand, that same 100 bill could feel and be life changing for a single mom just trying to get to pay day. We need to remember that God chose us, and we need to keep perspective on his full value every day as we walk in his light.

PRAY

