

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Ephesians 5

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through Paul's letter to the saints in Ephesus and by extension, to the saints here this morning - of what we are and who we are in Christ and of the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ – right now – by grace.

The saint – the individual who has placed their faith and trust in the life of Jesus and in the finished work of Jesus upon the cross –

God, Himself, has set us apart – that is what it means to be a saint

And because we have been set apart with a unique and special calling – we don't have to walk in spiritual poverty.

In the first three chapters, Paul talks about how we are “seated” in the heavenlies.

He talks about all the wonderful things that God has done for us.

Over the last few weeks – as we have studied ch 4 - the emphasis is on “walk”, on how we are to walk the Christian life, how we are to act – the practical portion of Paul's letter.

This is the manifestation of a spirit-filled life as we abide in Jesus, as we lean on the Holy Spirit in everything we do, as we make the decision to put on the new man, as we put on Christ.

Our own actions ought to flow from who God is and what He's done for us:

We ended our study last week with the following verse -

[Eph 4:32 NKJV] 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

So this morning –

Paul is going to get to the point.

He is going to clarify how our actions are to reflect God's work in you and me.

What does it mean to walk worthy, to walk in unity, to walk in purity, to walk in love, to walk in the light.

Paul is going to answer these things and more -

Let's pray...

Read Text – Ephesians 5:1-7

There is great confusion in the world today about what it means to be a Christian.

There is confusion even among the church about what it means to be a Christian –

Being a Christian is all about being good.

That Christianity is all about being a good person

He or she must be a Christian –

How do you know?

Because they are good. “They don’t drink, smoke or chew or go with girls that do”

The thinking is this –

God is good and we see this command in scripture for the believer to do good.

Write these verses down -

[Rom 12:21 NKJV] 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

[Eph 2:10 NKJV] 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

[Gal 6:9-10 NKJV] 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Here is the problem –

What does it mean to be “good” in our culture?

Does it mean simply to be better than I was

Does it mean to be better than others

Because the majority of people in our culture consider themselves to be good.

So what Paul is going to clear up for us this morning –

Is that the goal of the believer is not to simply be good, but to be Godly.

That is the work of the Holy Spirit in us and through us - as we are being conformed into the image of Christ.

So Paul reveals to us what it means to be a Christian –

Paul is going to give us clear direction on how we are to walk

And he begins by telling us that we are to imitate God in our conduct

We are to imitate God in our attitudes

And we are to imitate God in our words.

Let's look at our text -

[Eph 5:1-7 NKJV] 1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

Paul says, "Therefore!" Throughout this letter, we've been learning what it means to be saved, what power and resources are available to us, our place in God's unfolding, cosmic work.

Now it's time to go do what we've learned.

So we pattern, we mimic, we model, we imitate our lives after Jesus

Imitating God means reflecting His character to the world around us.

It means to think like He does, to react like He does, to value what He does, to treat others the way He does.

Christians are to imitate God to such a degree that others can then imitate us as they follow after the Lord.

Paul told the Thessalonians and the Corinthians, "Imitate me the way I imitate Christ."
(1 Cor 11:1), (2 Thes 3:7)

Hebrews tell us that, as we walk with the Lord, we should identify Godly, Christian leaders whose life outcomes demonstrate faithfulness and spiritual vibrance, and we should imitate them. (Heb 13:7)

Jesus is the standard – not for the super saint – not for the missionary or the pastor or those in full time ministry.

This is the standard for all believers.

The believer in God – follows God

We put on Christ – allowing Him to redefine the way we think and act and move in this world as we take on His characteristics.

This is possible because we share in His Divine nature. (2 Peter 1:3)

And notice that last portion of the verse – we imitate God as dear children

Children imitate their parents

This imitation isn't just a should.

This is who we're made to be.

We are children of God.

Just as you grew up in a family, sharing genes and heritage and traditions and ways of thinking, to a much more profound degree we are children in God's house.

I hear Bridget always telling Naomi and Sarah – “You are just like your father”

Sometimes it is a good thing and sometimes, according to her, it's a bad thing.

One more thing I want to bring up –

The phrase – dear children

In the Greek – it is the same words that God speaks when Jesus is baptized and says, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

This phrase speaks of divine love, a favorite love, a love of priority and importance.

Interestingly, when you look at the gospels, this term is used only in reference to Christ.

But, after the gospels, this word is also used in reference to Christians, those in Christ.

In the same way that the Father looked at His Son (Jesus), he now looks at you and me.

God is a good Father who loves his children deeply.

In the same way the Father is pleased with Jesus, he is pleased with you.

Because you are now in Christ, through faith in the finished work of the cross, God looks at you with total, divine pleasure.

God loves you with a holy love of true delight.

There is nothing you can do or say to make God any more pleased with you.

If you are in Christ, you are a beloved child of God, and nothing will ever change this.

You see, we hang out with the world – we are going to pick up worldly habits. We are going to imitate the world, respond to circumstances the way the world responds to circumstances.

But if we spend time with Jesus and spend time in His word and soak in His word and allowing His word to bathe our hearts

We are going to imitate Him

We are to imitate His character and love

How is that even possible?

[Rom 5:5 NKJV] 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

The Holy Spirit has given us the capacity to love like Jesus

To imitate Jesus

2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

This letter gives us a lot of practical items for living the Christian life, but the fundamental way we imitate God is by mimicking His agape love.

Because, without love the rest is a waste of time.

Our Heavenly Father didn't make the Son lay down His life.

He did it willingly because He loves us so much.

That's the kind of love we're to practice.

There is no greater love than when a person lays down their life on behalf of others.

Of course, that can mean dying for someone, but remember:

We're called to take up a cross every day and live in that same kind of love.

To love like living sacrifices.

[1Jo 3:16 NKJV] 16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren.

Love gives!!!!

Jesus' whole life was an offering of love.

He didn't save up all His love for one great finale

Every day, from the moment He rose till the time He went to bed was a sacrifice of love, offered as an act of worship to the Father and service to those that He encountered.

So that is the manner of living that we ought to live.

We start in love, continue in love, finish in love

If we are a child of God – this makes perfect sense that we will walk in love, that we demonstrate sacrificial love

What doesn't make sense is if we are selfish, bitter, sour, unkind, hypocritical of our brothers and sisters.

We are to love – even when we don't feel it.

We are called to love one another – not because we feel loved – but because we are commanded to love them.

[1Jo 3:23 NKJV] 23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

God says – love this person

Our response is “I can’t” love that person.

God’s response – “I know – but I want you to love them anyway”

Do it out of obedience –

You see, what we forget is that when we set our mind and our will to obey God, to love others, even when we don’t feel it, we forget that God meets us there – at the place of our obedience.

3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

These verses continue what we looked at last Sunday

that we must put off the old man

and put on the new person who has been created in Christ

The end of chapter 4 tells us about some of the stuff we need to take off and put on

in those verses, it is mostly anger and bitterness that is reflected in improper speech that we are to put off - while we are to put on tenderness and an attitude that is ready to forgive

Here in chapter 5, he tells us about some more stuff we are to put off - and here the idea that ties it all together is sexual immorality

Paul doesn't say here that we should avoid these thing so we can BE saints – he says that we avoid them because we ARE saints –

Paul is saying - Christian - Be what you are in Christ!

V. 3 prohibits the acts of sexual sin; v. 4 even prohibits the demeaning of sex by making light of it in speech

Paul is talking about coarse, sexually vulgar speech.

This is talk that is empty

This is talk that has no value

This is a conversation that does not result in the edification of the person you are speaking to – but is actually harmful and hurtful.

Our words matter. Matthew 12 says that, “on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak.”

But remember, I made the point last week that the problem is not the mouth – it is an issue of the heart.

Because the mouth cannot speak unless it came first from the heart.

This type of talk reveals a dirty heart.

Instead of dirty jokes and Godless speech, we should give thanks.

That's the antidote to the vices of verse 4

Thankfulness helps to protect us from negative and unsuitable speech.

It helps us imitate God.

5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

So, is Paul saying if I tell a dirty joke I lose my spot in heaven? No.

But he is pointing out that Christianity is completely, absolutely, fundamentally different in thought, attitude and behavior than regular, unsaved life.

Our words and behaviors reveal who we are and whose we are.

The mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.

From the heart comes sexual immoralities.

And from the heart flows God's living water.

The question is: What is the condition of the heart?

Jesus was the one scourged for us.

He walked the hill to Calvary, not to indulge Himself, but to die for us.

And now we have the chance to put on His likeness, to share in His Divine nature.

Now, we believers take off our former way of life, which was corrupted and ruined by our selfish, sinful desires, and are renewed in the spirit of our minds, made righteous and pure as we imitate our Holy God.

It doesn't mean you lose your salvation if you fall into sin.

Paul is talking about the habitual pattern of our hearts and lives.

But falling into sin is a terrible, defiling thing.

And a life given to sin is not a life that leads to the Kingdom.

It leads to destruction.

If we live our lives with a self-focus – then chances are that Jesus Christ is not our king

Chances are that is we lived a self-focus life – we are not imitators of God, we are imitators of the world.

Therefore - We must put off the old way.

Instead of going the old ways, the world's ways, we are to walk with God, in love, imitating the Lord as we go.

Here is part of the point.

Is it true that we all struggle? Yes

Is it true that we all have problems? Yes

Is it true that none of us are perfect? Yes

Paul is making it abundantly clear that a Christian can and will turn from their sin, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We don't come up with the wrong idea that grace gives us permission to live our life as if the gospel is not true.

Jesus saves us to change us

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them.

One of the movements in the church today is this move to validate brokenness in any form of life.

In the name of tolerance, in the name of love

That it really doesn't matter how we act or our attitudes toward sin don't matter

But they forget the God is holy and just

God is going to judge every one of us.

(Heb 9:27 NKJV) And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

God has standards that He's looking for.

(1 Cor 6:9-11 NKJV) Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, {10} nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. {11} And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

The truth is, we are all sinners.

And we have all done these kinds of horrible things.

But God has a way out.

Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins. And when we open our heart to Jesus and ask God to forgive us, then God cleanses us and makes us right in His eyes.

We are to be different

Paul didn't say "don't love them".

He said, "do not be partakers with them"

Don't do them

Don't participate with them

Those who love God want to honor God with their actions, thoughts, and words. And those who fear God will turn away from evil.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; it prolongs life.

Those who love and fear God won't want to continue walking in the wickedness they've been delivered from.

This is never going to be accomplished through will power –

It is only accomplished by laying aside the old man and putting on the new man which God prepared for His children to wear.

We put on Jesus.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[1Jo 3:2-3 NKJV] 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

We grow and progress as we imitate God - not trying to be good people, but living as Godly people.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

