**“WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT”**

**Ephesians 5:1-14**

Real world situation – I want you to tell me how you would respond to this. About 15 years ago me and a work associate were having a discussion at work. He was Church of Christ and I was a Baptist so we would have theological discussions, mostly about the doctrine of eternal security. Anyway, he asked me this question: “I know this woman who when she was younger made a profession of faith and became a Christian. Now she sleeps around with every man in town and just lives like the devil. Tell me, do you think she’s going to heaven?” That’s a tough question! And it hits at the heart of our lesson this morning, which is why I brought it up. So I want you to help me out, class, brothers, sisters – how would you answer my friend if he asked you that question? Talk to me.

*[discussion]* What I’m getting from you is that it *[does/doesn’t]* matter how we live now that we’re saved, right?

Let me read our passage from Ephesians Ch 5…

READ Ephesians 5:1-14

V 1 starts off with “Therefore.” Whenever you see the word “therefore” it connects what the author is about to say with what he said just before. And Paul does this a lot in Ephesians, 11 times in fact. Throughout this letter he’s following a logical, progressing argument. Given this, then this…

So then, let’s review what Paul just said in Ch 4. As Christians, as saints, as part of the body of Christ, we are to do something (Ch 4-6 are the practical application part of Ephesians). We are to first put OFF our old self and then put ON the new self. And Paul is very specific about what this means. We put off the old things, those characteristics that defined us when we were lost. We no longer act like we did before we were saved. We don’t lie. We don’t steal. We don’t carry around feelings of bitterness. We don’t have unforgiving hearts. We’re not harboring anger. Even the way we talk has changed. No longer do we have filthy language. No longer do we constantly criticize and tear others down. Instead we put on, we convey brand new attitudes and actions that the Holy Spirit produces in our lives after we’re saved – things like love, graciousness, forgiveness, treating others kindly, etc. As Ch 4 draws to a close Paul drives home the reason why we Christians are to be loving and forgiving of others. And the reason is that “God in Christ forgave you!” Because of what Christ did on the cross, we have been forgiven of our sins. For this reason we should forgive others. And if you recall from last week’s lesson, I referenced Jesus’ parable of the unforgiving servant from Matt Ch 18 *[briefly review].* As Christians we are expected to be loving and forgiving people, not holding grudges.

“Therefore,” Paul says, Ch 5, v 1, “be imitators of God, as beloved children.” The Greek verb form of the noun translated as “imitators” here means “to mimic.” We are to be imitators of God. We are to mimic God. We are to be just like Him. And Paul presents the picture of us as beloved children. Kids copy the actions and language of those they’re around, especially the adult role models, such as their parents and teachers. If their parents, for example, go around cussing and swearing, guess what? So will their children. If their parents go to church and practice their Christianity, guess what? Their children are very likely to do the same.

Like little children who mimic their parents, we are to be imitators of our heavenly Father. And here Paul isn’t simply saying we are to be like little children. The reality is that we ARE His children, aren’t we? Back in Eph 1:5 Paul says, “He [God the Father] predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will,” So we became children of God thru an adoption process. God adopted us into His family. God is our Father. We now bear the family name. We have all rights and privileges that go along with that. And there are expectations of behavior that go with that, which we just read in this passage.

So we are to imitate God and the specific pattern that has been given to us to follow is Who? Jesus Christ, v 2 – “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us.” So Jesus is our pattern. *[example of young children trying to draw a circle]* That’s the picture here.

What does Paul mean when he says, “walk”? This term refers to our daily conduct, our lifestyle. We are to be like Christ in our day to day living, in our behavior and attitudes. We are to love like Christ, show compassion like Christ, forgive like Christ, pray like Christ, interact with others the way Christ would, etc. It’s an easy concept to understand, but hard to live. We cannot do it in our own strength nor by our own effort. We need the help of the Holy Spirit. That is why God has given to us the Holy Spirit to reside in us and to help us to be more like Christ.

Before we go on to v 3 let me briefly comment on the last phrase of v 2, where it talks about how Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, a reference to His death on the cross for our sins – “a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” This harkens back to the O.T. sacrifices. There were three offerings mentioned in Lev 1-3 that produced “a pleasing aroma to the Lord” – the burnt offering, the grain offering and the peace offering. What Jesus did on the cross for us, His sacrifice, pleased God completely. You think about how much Jesus loved us, how He willingly took our place on the cross, what He went thru in order to pay our sin debt and make a way for us to have a relationship with God – and basically Paul says, we are to love like that. We are to love like God loves, with a self-less, self-sacrificing, and unconditional (John 3:16) kind of love. “Walk in love as Christ loved us!”

Then we come to v 3 and Paul shifts gears – “But---” And in the next few verses Paul contrasts God’s love with worldly love.

Did you all know that Satan is a liar and deceiver? Did you know that the devil counterfeits the things of God, then tries to pawn them off on us as the real thing? That’s what he did in the Garden and still does today. Satan has done this with love. Now Paul just got done showing us how God’s love is forgiving, seeks not its own, is self-sacrificing and is unconditional. Contrast this kind of love, true love, godly love with the kind of so-called love of the world, Satan’s counterfeit love. That’s what you see in v 3-7. So much of the world’s love is centered around self. Just listen to the lyrics of so many love songs. The whole idea is how does that other person make ME feel? What do they have to offer ME? “I’ll love you forever so long as you love me back.” “You are everything to me, until someone new and more attractive comes along.” Too often the world’s love is not love at all, but lust, taking a beautiful expression and twisting it into something ugly and perverted. Just look at the list Paul gives us in v 3. You have sexual immorality, impurity and covetousness (coveting someone who is not your own wife or husband). Paul says these things “must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.” The KJV says “not once named among you.” In 1 Cor 5 Paul exhorts the Corinthian believers to not even associate with people who do such things. “Flee immorality!” (1 Cor 6:18) “Flee youthful passions!” (2 Tim 2:22)

And don’t just avoid doing the things mentioned in v 3, but don’t even talk about them, v 4 says. James Ch 1 has a lot to say about our speech and ties together what we do with what we say.

 Don’t do these things, Paul says. “But instead,” end of v 4, “let there be thanksgiving.” Do you realize that whenever we give thanks to God or to others that it is the most unselfish thing we do? Being thankful means that we are content and grateful and with our mouths we express that for the benefit of others. “What you did, I appreciate.”

V 5 lists the same things mentioned back in v 3. Paul says that if a person who claims to be a Christian, lives like that, then they better examine themselves. Paul is rather blunt. He says that they’re not a part of God’s kingdom. Those are strong words, aren’t they? *[back to opening example I gave]* What you have here is a word of warning for the saints, for all of us. Bottom line, if you live like Paul has just described then you are, v 6, “the sons (the children) of disobedience.” And Paul says the wrath of God, His judgment will be upon you. This is a warning. It’s a wake-up call. It’s not too late to repent and to get right with God. But in order to repent you must first be confronted with your sin.

So, as Christians, who are we? We’re “beloved children.” We are “saints.” We have been called to live holy lives. In v 7, Paul’s admonition is, “don’t become partners with them.” With who? With those who practice the wickedness he just described. Now let me back up. In v 6 Paul says, “Let no one deceive you with empty words.” There are a lot of false teachings out there which are not scriptural. *[examples of some of the false ideas being spread]*

Paul says, “That’s not who we are.” READ Ephesians 5:8

There was a time when we were darkness, but now we are light, so “walk as children of light.” Paul here is using Jesus’ language. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told His followers, “you are the light of the world” (Matt 5:14) and “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matt 5:16) In John Ch 12 Jesus referred to believers as “the sons of light.” So Paul says, v 8, “walk as children of light.” 1 Thess 5:5, “For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night.” That’s not who we are!

In v 9 Paul clarifies in the parentheses what he means by the term “light.” After all in the Bible light can have a number of meanings. READ Ephesians 5:9

Light, “the fruit of light,” the characteristics of light are doing what “is good and right and true.”

Good = moral excellence, virtue

Right = righteous behavior, holiness

True = honesty, integrity

How do we know what is good and right and true? From reading and studying God’s word. As the saints of God we are to live as God has told us to live in His word.”

READ Ephesians 5:10

The KJV is actually a better translation here – “proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.” This verse conveys the idea of proving, of showing evidence of a life that pleases God. It’s not enough to just know what is good, right and true, but, are you living these same things out in your life? What does the evidence show? That’s the idea.

V 11, “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness…” Don’t even get involved with them. Those things should not even be a part of your live. “… but instead expose them.” Knowing what God’s word says, based on THAT, we need to call sin what it is -- “sin.” The Bible says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.” (2 Tim 3:16) So we start with our sins and deal with those first. Then we expose sin in others.

V 12 says that “it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.” Unfortunately, in our day our minds have been dulled to sin by Hollywood and the media. I don’t know where to begin on this one. As Christians, we SHOULD be embarrassed and ashamed and even angry about sin when we see it before us, whether on the TV screen, movies, PC monitor or in real life. God’s standard never changes!

V 13-14 “But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light.” The light of God’s word exposes sin for what it is. Therefore, it says, v 14 “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” KJV says, “and Christ shall give thee light.” Paul is referencing Isaiah 60:1 which says, “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.” Isaiah looks forward to a time when the Messiah will bring salvation. Paul sees Jesus as the fulfillment of this. What we have here in v 14 is an invitation. The sleeper is the sinner. Their condition is dead. Christ is the Savior. Paul’s message to fallen sinners is “It’s not too late. Come to Jesus!”

I close with Jesus’ words in John 8:12: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Clearly our behavior does matter.