

# Ephesians 5

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## Introduction.

- A. Well, friends, despite a hiatus that has lasted since mid- to late January, this evening, we're going to resume our study of Ephesians. As I was doing my own study in preparation for this sermon, I realized that I was totally out of the Ephesians mindset, so I figure that all of you, who weren't even doing all the preparing and preaching, are probably still going to have your minds back in our teaching classes or something.
- B. With that in mind, let's look back at what we've seen so far in the book. In Ephesians 1, we saw Paul praise God for all the blessings He has given to Christians, and then pray that the Ephesians might understand just how good they've got it in Christ. Ephesians 2 elaborates on that idea. Paul describes the way that Christ has saved the Ephesians from death and joined them to Jewish Christians and to God. Ephesians 3 describes the work that Paul has done in bringing such glory to them, and returns to the interrupted prayer from Ephesians 1. In it, Paul asks that God may complete His work in the Ephesians, so that they can glorify Him. The end of Ephesians 3 marks the switch in the book from doctrinal to practical concepts. Paul uses Ephesians 4 to explain just what the Ephesians need to do to glorify God. They need to change their lives to be like Christ.
- C. The discussion of Ephesians 4 actually doesn't end before the next chapter break appears. We've observed before that the chapter breaks are the creation of men, not God, and so they don't necessarily come in the best places. This one is not a good chapter break. It's right in the middle of a subpoint. So, in our lesson this evening, we're going to deal with Ephesians 4's unfinished business, then explore the rest of Ephesians 5.

## I. Children of Light

- A. The first main section of Ephesians 5 that we want to look at now is Ephesians 5:1-14. To begin with, the thing that we need to see at the very start of this context is how closely it connects back with the tail end of Ephesians 4. If we look back at vs. 31-32 of that chapter, we see that Paul is talking about those warm sort of virtues like mercy and forgiveness. If we look at vs. 1-2 in Ephesians 5, what do we see? We see the same kind of thing. That's because the chapter-break person saw the "therefore" at the beginning of vs. 1 and figured Paul was shifting thoughts, when really he wasn't. The "therefore" is just Paul saying "God forgave you" at the end of chapter 4, and because God forgave us, we need to imitate God in His forgiveness. Likewise, in the next verse, like Jesus died for us, we need to lead lives of self-sacrificing love.
- B. As messages go, "Forgive people and love them" is not hard to understand, but it is incredibly hard to do. It means that we need to be as gracious with people who wrong us as God is with us when we wrong Him. It means that we need to live our lives looking to other people and living for them, just like Christ did for us. This isn't something we can do by showing up at the church building for four hours a week. It's something we have to dedicate our lives to doing. Only then are we living up to the example we've been given.
- C. The final subpoint in the Ephesians 4 series that started with vs. 25 in that chapter is actually vs. 3-5 of Ephesians 5. Here, Paul tells us that we need not just to avoid lives that are sexually immoral or covetous. We also need to avoid speech that is immoral, both speaking it ourselves and, as much as possible, listening to it. I know that in today's schools and workplaces, it's not uncommon to hear language and discussions that would give my mother a heart attack on the spot. We can't help that. We can help, though, bringing that into our entertainment. It seems like for the past ten years or so, the really raunchy movie comedy has been in vogue. I don't watch them myself, but from what I see in the reviews, they're filled with coarse words and sexual humor and the language of people with no morality. That's exactly what vs. 4 is talking about. When we go see movies like that, we're actually paying money to see something that disgusts God. What's more, if our ears are filled with that kind of evil talk, it won't be long before our lips are too. Let's avoid it altogether.
- D. The conclusion to this appendix to chapter 4 comes in 5:6. When Paul says "these things" here, he's actually referring back to the list that started in vs. 25. He's talking about anger, theft, corrupt talk, and corrupt lives. Let's not be deceived, brethren. If we ignore God's will in these things, we're not going to beat the rap. Instead, we're going to be destroyed along with the rest of the wicked. Our salvation depends on living right.
- E. Paul presents the alternative in vs. 7-14. He tells us first of all that we must not live like the wicked because our nature is essentially different. They are darkness; we are light. Paul then goes on to tell us that being a child of light means first of all doing what's right, but also seeking to do what's right. Let's look at the first part first. We are saved by grace; that is undeniably true. However, it is also true that if we are genuine Christians, our lives will show it. We will be able to point to things that we do that show we are God's children.
- F. Likewise, though, we will also spend our time trying to figure out what pleases God. This is such an important verse because it hits a lot of us where we live, myself included. Sometimes, we're tempted to weasel with the word of God, trying to figure out how much we can get away with before we cross the line into sin. Paul here is saying, "Don't do that, because that's what children of darkness do." They're the ones who want to get as

close to the devil as they can. Children of light, though, are the ones who want to get close to God. They say, "What in this situation would make God happiest?" and then that's what they do. That's what we should do.

- G. Paul elaborates on this theme in the next few verses. He tells us that we should take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness. We should hate them and want nothing to do with them. Sometimes this is easy. I think, in fact, it's one of the reasons why many evangelicals love to preach against homosexuality. They're not tempted by that particular sin, so it makes an easy target. Friends, we can't just hate the easy target. We have to hate the hard targets too. We have to hate the garden-variety heterosexual lust that leads our thoughts astray whenever an attractive member of the opposite sex walks by. We have to hate the urge to binge on junk food that tries to drag us into gluttony. We have to make our pet sins our hatreds, and we have to drag them kicking and screaming out into the light so that we see how hateful they are. We need to consider our temptations not in the light of what we want to do, but in the unflinching glare of God's word.

## II. Wisdom and Submission.

- A. Paul then shifts gears a little bit as he heads into our second big chunk of Scripture, Ephesians 5:15-33. He begins here with the context of vs. 15-20. It's not enough, he says, for us just to walk in the light. We also must walk carefully and wisely. Then, we get to vs. 16, which tells us that we need to make the most of our time, for the days are evil. If ever there was a verse for Christians in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, this is it. These days are definitely evil, brethren. There is tremendous economic strain right now, but even more than that, our nation is as morally corrupt as it has ever been before. Today, it's easy for the righteous to lapse into fatalism and despair, but that's exactly what we must not do. When the times are dark, that's when God's people must shine forth most brightly. That's when we have to make every second of every day count for the Lord. That's when we have to do the maximum amount of good in a world that so desperately needs it.
- B. We see a similar admonition about wise walking beginning in vs. 18. In these evil times, people look to intoxication to brighten their days. Joliet still has a bar on every corner, and lately, I'm sure all those bars have been full. We can't find our joy in the bottom of a bottle. Instead, our joy has to be a spiritual joy, a joy so great that we literally can't shut up about it. That's the lead-in to vs. 19. Sometimes, we read this verse as saying, "No pianos," and I think that's a good application of the text, but that's not really where Paul is headed. He tells us that we should be singing to one another not out of some tired sense of duty, but because of this joy that we have, because we are so filled up with delight in God and His grace and His word that we take any chance we can to sing about it with each other. That's what God truly wants our worship to be like.
- C. This takes us to our final context for the chapter, in vs. 21-33. It's important to break up the context in this way because of the way that vs. 21 illuminates everything else. Sometimes, we treat vs. 21 like it's this meaningless little tail at the end of the really important passage about instrumental music. In reality, vs. 21 is a subject heading for everything we're going to see in the rest of chapter 5 and halfway through chapter 6. Submit to one another, Paul tells us, and his words to wives, husbands, children, parents, slaves, and masters all describe different kinds of Christian submission. All of those are situations where we put another first.
- D. The first one that Paul gets into, and one of only two in this chapter, is the way that wives are to submit to husbands, as described in vs. 22-24. I'm not sure that there's another idea in the entire Bible that is hated and spoken against as much in modern America as this one. After the Feminist Revolution, the idea that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church is anathema, but that's what the text says.
- E. Because of all that cultural baggage, there may be no divine command that is harder for the Christian woman to put into practice than this one. All of us are familiar with Christian families where the woman wears the pants instead of letting the husband be the head. It may be that her husband is weak-willed and worthless; it may be that she doesn't respect him, but to be blunt, she should have thought of that before she married him. Brethren, there are no escape clauses to this command! It says that women need to submit to their husbands in everything, and if Christian women want to go to heaven, that's what they need to do. What this looks like is going to vary a great deal from marriage to marriage. One woman's Christian submission is not going to look like another woman's Christian submission. However, submission and respect is what it needs to be.
- F. Likewise, it is the responsibility of the husband to submit to the needs of his wife by loving her like Christ loved the church. Christ gave up everything for the church, so, men, we need to give up everything for our wives. Everything, period. Unless we gave it to God first, if we've got it, it needs to be hers, and an awful lot of husbands have been disasters at this. We've talked about the troubles caused by feminism, but if all husbands nourished and cherished their wives like God wanted them to, I doubt the Feminist Revolution would ever have happened. We can't change our country, but we can change our marriages, by taking charge and being the servant-leaders God demands that we be. We should be so dedicated to our wives, caring for her needs and attending to her wants, that the thought of putting on the pants to get some of her own back should never cross her mind. That means working as much as we need to to provide for her physically. That means not being afraid to wash the dishes or clean the house when she's had a hard day. That means letting her have the extra money for her things, not for our toys. That's not even the surface of what Christ did for the church.

**Conclusion.** If you want to leave behind the deeds of darkness and walk in the light, turn to God this evening.