

Living In Resurrection Power
(Week 8)
Ephesians 4:31-5:14
“Imitate God”

Introduction

“Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ. Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children, and walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.” Ephesians 4:31-5:2

It is unfortunate that those who divided up *The Bible* into chapters and verses chose to begin chapter five where they did. **Verses 31-32** of **Chapter Four** are actually part of the discourse that begins in **Chapter Five**. Paul is telling the Ephesians that they should no longer treat each other as the world does, but to treat one another the way that Christ has treated them. The child of God is meant to be the “spitting image” of his Father. When others observe us, they should be able to perceive what God is truly like. The word “Christian” actually means “little Christ”. Therefore, we should forever be striving to be just like Jesus in all that we say and do.

When we read the gospels, we are given insight into just how our LORD conducted Himself when He walked in flesh among men. His character is unparalleled by any other who has ever lived. Every religion has its founder, a person to whom its followers aspire to be like, but let me tell you with complete certainty, no other “religious person” is a fraction of the man Jesus is. This is why *The Bible* tells us that :

“...at the name of Jesus every knee will bow — in heaven and on earth and under the earth — and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God The Father.”
Philippians 2:10-11

Every Christian should realize that the standard for us to achieve is nothing less than the example set by Christ Jesus. We may be able to compare ourselves to others and feel that we are doing alright, but others are not the standard. We are to judge ourselves in the light of Christ’s perfection. Now, I don’t know about you, but when I do this, I always find that there is a lot more that needs to be improved in “my walk”! And yet, here is Paul letting us know that it is by this that the Christian life will be measured: Do others see Jesus... in you?

In our own strength, this is of course, impossible. But, God has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit to empower us. Therefore, we can and should strive to emulate Christ in all that we do for He has given us the power to do so. The rest is, quite frankly, up to us. As you examine your life this morning, do you come across as worldly or Christlike? Look at the contrast given in **verses 31-32**.

Worldly: bitterness, anger, wrath, shouting and slander

Godly: kind, compassionate, forgiving

There is a stark difference my friends. Paul tells us that if we have truly been filled with Christ, then we will emulate Christ. We will go from walking in strife to **Walking in Love**. We go from darkness to **Walking in Light**. To be filled with The Spirit of God is to be brought literally from death to life (**Ephesians 2:1-5**), from the darkness of the tomb to the spiritual light of life in Christ. Have you been changed by the grace of God? Then you have been called to be “the light of the world”!

Walking In Love

“Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children, and walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God. But sexual immorality and any impurity or greed should not even be heard of among you, as is proper for saints. Obscene and foolish talking or crude joking are not suitable, but rather giving thanks. For know and recognize this: Every sexually immoral or impure or greedy person, who is an idolator, does not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” **Ephesians 5:1-5**

The word that Paul uses here, translated “imitators” (followers in the KJV) is “mimetes” in the Greek, and it is where we derive our word “mimic”. Paul is literally telling us that as Believers we should mimic the actions of the One in Whom we have believed. Just as a child will mimic its parents when learning to walk and talk, we should conduct ourselves as Christ did as we learn how to walk, as it were, in this fallen world. And, if we closely examine the way that Christ lived, it becomes evident that everything that He said and did was motivated by His love for us, as well as, His Father in heaven. In short, Paul is telling us that if we are to walk and talk like Christ, then it will be His love that shines through in all that we say and do.

Christ proved His love for us and for God by willingly giving His life as a sacrifice upon Calvary’s cross. Paul, being the Jewish Rabbi that he is, uses an *Old Testament* reference to describe the love that Christ demonstrated in His sacrificial death. He calls it a “fragrant offering” to God. This is a reference to the burnt offering or “holocaust” that was prescribed in ***Leviticus 1***. As a show of devotion, the children of Israel were instructed to offer up a spotless bull from their herd to be burned upon the altar in its entirety.

The only part of the animal that was not burned upon the altar of The LORD was the hide (or skin), which was given to the priest to be used for clothing. This is a wonderful picture of Christ’s death upon the cross. He offered up all of Himself as a ransom for us. By so doing, He proved once and for all His devotion both to us, and to God The Father. He held nothing back in saving us. He gave His all. I truly love the part about the skin of the bull being given to clothe the priests. What an awesome picture of the church! You see, we are a royal priesthood, and we have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ. It is as if we were wrapped in the skin of Jesus, when we surrendered our lives to Him! When God looks at us, he now sees His Son, rather than the pitiful naked wretches that we were when we lived according to our flesh. Isn’t it wonderful how everything in *The Old Testament* points us to the finished work of The LORD Jesus?

Paul goes on to remind us, if we are truly clothed with the righteousness of Christ, then our “walk” should prove it. The child of God has no place with the sexually immorality and self serving greed of the children of darkness. In fact, he goes on to say that it is not proper to even joke about such things (***vs. 4***). The child of God should be repulsed by dirty jokes and sexual innuendo. After all, if you have been given a “new mind” by the **HOLY** Spirit, then it should also be a clean one, should it not? *The Bible* proclaims that none of these immoral traits should even be “heard of among us” (***vs. 3***). After all, those who practice such things are nothing like Christ.

I find it interesting that Paul links sexual immorality with greed in this passage. At first it seems to be an odd pairing. But, when you consider it, it makes perfect sense. Sexual immorality and greed both have the same exact root cause, which is living only to gratify one’s self. Selfish passions, when left uncontrolled will lead a person to do whatever it takes to obtain whatever his wicked heart desires. The sexually immoral live for sensual pleasure, not caring for the consequences of their actions, nor who may be hurt as a result. As a pastor I have sat and listened to far too many horror stories of the damages done by someone who is so consumed with their own lusts, that they are willing to destroy their marriage and even their relationship with their children. Immorality is the mortal enemy of the family. Do not be fooled into thinking that it is without consequence.

“Can a man embrace fire and his clothes not be burned? Can a man walk on burning coals without scorching his feet? So it is with the one who sleeps with another man’s wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.” Proverbs 6:27-29

The word that Paul uses for “*sexual immorality*” (fornication in the KJV) is “*porneia*” in the Greek from which we derive the word pornographic. It refers to any and all sexual activity outside the bounds of a normal **married heterosexual relationship**. In short, a man and his wife’s marriage covenant is sacred in the eyes of God, and no amount of “cultural influence” will **EVER** be able to change God’s mind on the subject. Sadly we live in a time where there are as many divorces within the church as there are in the world. Many who claim to be believers regularly expose themselves to pornographic literature and various other forms of unfettered lusts. This is a sad commentary on just how little we value *The Word* of God in our modern day culture. We would do well to remember;

“...— without holiness, no one will see The LORD.”

Hebrews 12:14b

God intended for a man to leave his father and mother and CLING to his wife (**Matthew 19:5**). This special bond, which includes all things sexual, is a sacred trust to be shared just between the two of them. God intended for married spouses to know each other in a way that no one else ever would or could. This is meant to represent the bond that Christ has with His Church. The intimate fellowship between married people is theirs, and theirs alone. This world would offer up a cheap substitute, but it is only that... a cheap substitute. It is about time the church started standing up for the sacred institution of marriage and shun with extreme prejudice, the immoral filth that is so prevalent in this world.

Any who would continue to pursue their own desires for self gratification, whether it be sexual or any other form of greed (idolatry), are only fooling themselves, if they claim to be filled with The Spirit of God. If you are still as worldly as you always were... then you are still worldly. Paul warns us that those who live for themselves have no place in the kingdom of God. To walk in love is to put the commands of Christ, as well as, the welfare of others above our own needs, wants, and desires. No man who loves his wife more than he loves himself, would dare cheat on her, for he could not bear the hurt it would cause. No one, who loves Christ more than he loves himself, would willingly set aside His commandments for selfish pleasure. His love compels him to obey. To **walk in love** is to walk in **obedience to be imitators of Christ**.

“The one who has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me. And the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father. I also will love him and will reveal Myself to him.”

John 14:21

Walking In Light

“Let no one deceive you with empty arguments, for God’s wrath is coming on the disobedient because of these things. Therefore, do not become their partners. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in The LORD. Live as children of light — for the fruit of the light consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth — testing what is pleasing to The LORD. Don’t participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what is done by them in secret. Everything exposed by the light is made visible, for what makes everything visible is light. Therefore it is said: Get up, sleeper, and rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Ephesians 5:6-14

There are many false teachers out there. And they have no problem assuring people that they are ok just the way they are, just so long as they keep their money coming into the church. But Paul warns any who would listen, that those who have not been changed from the inside out by The Spirit will have no place in God’s kingdom. Paul reminds us here of the charge that Christ gave to His followers to be the light of the world:

“You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14-16

You see, we have been set apart by The Spirit of God to illuminate this world of darkness. Notice that Paul says to the Ephesians that they too “were once darkness”. He didn’t say that they were once “in darkness”, but that they were actually dark themselves. This is the condition of those who are enslaved to sin. They are darkened by evil and hopelessness, unless they are rescued and enlightened by The Spirit. Then, they become “light”. Paul reminds us that as “children of light” we not only have no place in the dark, but we are also called to expose and repel it.

Have you ever turned over a rock and saw all the creepy crawly things that are hiding underneath, just waiting for the nightfall to come so that they can come out to resume their nightly activity? When the rock is turned over these creatures of the night will scurry away, as quickly as possible, looking for a dark crevice in which to hide. That is a perfect example of just what this lost world is like, when the light of Christ is exposed to them. We are to be that light. Just like a city on a hill, the child of God is to think, speak, and act in such a way as to expose the sinfulness of this world. Many will run away in fear of the light, but some will be drawn to it and forever changed. We are to represent a stark contrast to the dark. We who have been enlightened by The Spirit are called to be light wherever we go. This is why it is imperative for the children of light to have nothing in common with the darkness. In fact, we are commanded not to even speak of the things that they do in the dark (**vs 12**).

“For it is shameful even to mention what is done by them in secret.”

So, you see now, just how holy God expects His children to be? We are not only commanded to live in light, but to also think and speak light! In order to do this, in order to keep from allowing our thoughts to be corrupted by the dark, we must carefully guard what we allow ourselves to see and hear. Unfortunately, the filth that is all around us is so very prevalent in our society that it is difficult for the child of God to keep their thoughts pure. The constant barrage of media, from television, radio, and even the tabloids we see in the checkout line at the grocery store are increasingly pornographic in nature. Can I get a witness? If we are not careful, we will start to believe that these images with which we are constantly being bombarded are “normal”. But they are not normal, my friends, they are sinful.

Once again, if we have truly been given a “new mind” in Christ, then it most certainly should remain a clean mind. We must be ever watchful of what we allow to enter into it! We must never return to the darkness from which we have been delivered. We must live as children of light. Just how protective are you, of the new mind that you have in Christ? Are you being a light in this world, or are you hiding your light so that you won’t stand out in the crowd? Do you think, speak, and walk as Jesus walked, or are you at home among the dark ones? These are the questions that we must continually ask ourselves as children of light. Or else we can bring no glory to God as we have been commanded. Have you truly been brought from darkness to light by The Spirit of The Living God. Are you wrapped up in the righteousness of Christ today? If the answer is no, then may I share with you a suggestion from the Apostle Paul that many think was taken from a first century Christian hymn:

“Get up, sleeper, and rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Ephesians 6:14

Come into the light and be changed!

And let all of the children of light say... TRUTH!!!