

Ephesians Chapter 5

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For those who don't know the book of Ephesians can be divided into two halves: The first half is about what God does for us as members of the Christian church. The second half is in effect what we should do in response to that! If you wanted to know what God expects of us as believers, you are in the right neighborhood! As I state a lot, there are no chapter breaks in the original text. With that said, the first verse in this chapter says we as Christians should "be imitators of God". Yes, that sounds impossible. I like to quote a pastor I know who once said, "Every time I think about what God is like, all I do is get a headache!" (David Hocking.) The idea of that statement is not to be God-like, but to act in a way that's pleasing to Him. Which leads to the question: If we're saved by faith alone what do we do now?

As most of us know God created us for a purpose: To glorify Him. In effect all believers (the Christian church) are a wedding gift for Jesus for what He did for us. Still God does not say, "You're saved now, so you're free to die!" God created us to be a witness for Him. He uses us to reach other people who'll become believers and help believers grow in their faith! That's why He gives each of us gifts that we're to use for the church's benefit. In effect, that's what Chapters 4-6 of Ephesians is about. In particular, I would say Chapters 5 and 6 state in effect, "Here's how God expects Christians to act!" I realize we are not perfect, and we all mess up at times. What we learn as believers is when the Holy Spirit is working within us (trusting God to guide us at any moment), then we be the type of witness God desires that we be for Him! It's not a matter of gritting our teeth and trying harder! It's about letting go and letting God "take over". How do we do that? It starts with a desire for Him to work in us. We should regularly pray in effect to "get out of our own way and let Him be in charge!" No, it is not easy, but I believe each of us who believe Jesus is God has the capability of living as He desires. Realize Chapters 5-6 (that's the end of the letter) give examples of how God expects us to live. With that said, time for the details:

The first key point is in Verse 2. We are to show love to others as much as Jesus loves us. How do we do that? It's the idea of showing love to others. It's also a matter of acting differently enough where it's obvious to others that we as Christians don't center our lives in sinful activities! For example, Verse 3 lists things Christians should never associate with. The first is sexual immorality. Realize that the city of Ephesus was known for its huge temple where prostitution was encouraged to arouse their false god! Since "we're on sex", let's get that subject out of the way! God is not anti-sexual activity. We wouldn't be alive if our parents were not "pro-sex". God's ideal is sex within marriage, which we'll discuss later in the chapter. Like most things in life, it's meant for good but to live as if it's central for our happiness is a problem! Paul then mentions impurity (that's doing things that defile us as believers and I'll expand on that later). He discusses covetousness which is to desire what doesn't belong to us! Then Paul gets a lot more specific in these two chapters. For example, he discusses our language (crude joking, dealing with filthy things). The underlying idea isn't that those things do lead us to hell. The point is God wants us to be a good witness for Him. That means acting differently enough where people will wonder why we don't care to join them in those things! The point is people who do that on a regular basis is a good indicator of non-salvation (which one can repent of!). It also means this life is the only happiness such people will ever receive!

This sort of "talk" continues all the way to Verse 11. Remember that if struggle with this sin or you are still involved in "that sin" doesn't mean you're not saved if you're trusting in Jesus for your salvation. It just means you're a bad witness for Jesus at that moment. Again, we're back to why we're saved, we are saved to be a witness for Jesus. Does that mean we can't work or enjoy life, of course not! God wants

to be the center of our lives. The idea is as we do activities, every now and then we need to ponder if it is pleasing to God or not? Usually, it's obvious and He makes it known if we're to be doing "it" or not!

In fact a key term used in this section is "darkness and light". The idea is we should be a light for Jesus in that we reflect how He wants us to act (think about the opening verse again!). As my friends know, I love to preach that the most valuable thing we own is our time. God gives us an unspecified amount of time to live and since He calls us to be a witness for Him, it's about using the time we have wisely. Of course, I believe in leisure time and having fun. I also realize what God called me to do, which is why I am "pounding at the keyboard" just as God puts a desire in each of our hearts to use our gifts to benefit the church body in some way, shape or form!

So how do we understand what is God's will for our lives? Pray about it. I'm positive one prayer God will always answer is what is His will for us "right now". Usually, it's what's obvious and what is right in front of us to do at that moment. Again, the point is to make the best use of our time as God calls us to live (again as a witness for Him), which is always unique for every person!

Verse 18 gives another contrast: It says to avoid getting drunk (a popular thing among the people who don't have Jesus as the center of their lives!) God wants us "filled with the Spirit". Again, it's the idea of focusing on God and what He desires for our lives! Paul encourages us to study Psalms and sing to God to uplift our spirits. Does that mean all secular music is bad? Of course not. The issue is what do we want to do. To quote my old pastor, "I drink all the alcohol I want! I just don't want much because focusing on God makes me far happier than anything a stimulant or depressant will do!"

Which leads us back to the topic of love. It's not about hugging everyone around us (nothing against a good hug), but it's about putting the needs of others as priority over our own needs! That's why Verse 21 says to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. It's not about saying God bless you every time we hug someone! It's about realizing God is the center of our lives. Therefore, our priority in life is to notice the needs of others around us and ask if we can help!

Of all things Paul switches from love to marriage. Remember Paul wasn't married, but he's traveled to a lot of places and seen a lot of marriages. The one's he's probably seen work the best is when both are driven by a desire to serve each other, and both put each other first. Still if there's two people one must lead. I recall an episode on the TV Show "Seinfeld" where a character asks a lesbian, when you dance with your partner, who leads, do you decide that ahead of time? The point of that joke is in dancing, a leader is necessary, and God decided men are to lead. To quote a great movie line, "Men are the heads, but women are the necks that can control the head". (From My Big Fat Greek Wedding.) Men have to control their desire to want every beautiful woman they see. So wives must control their natural desire to fix the men in their lives! "When your man messes up, it's God's problem, not their wives!" Enough of that, realize Paul only using three verses to teach about wife's submission as I just described.

Notice that Paul uses eight verses to "pick on the men" and only a few for wives. Because God says a man is to lead in marriage, they're responsible for their wives to lead and provide for them! Remember that God desires we all be good witnesses for Him and the husband should lead by example! Paul uses the example that it's a natural desire to love our bodies (i.e., we eat when we're hungry and take care of our own health). In that sense, we as men to love our wives as much as our own bodies! What about in cases when we men mess up? What about dealing with divorce or unbelieving spouses? Obviously, it's issues that need to be addressed. We're talking about what God desires (ideal) for us. For men it's to be the leader and a good example to our wives as well as to care for her and please her just as it should be the wives desire to please her husband. To use a line I heard a comedian say, "Two people can move a

couch easily, for one person it's impossible!" The issue is again about serving one another and working together to grow as a couple, again with the goal of being a good witness for Jesus both separately and together as a couple.

The part about men ends with one key thought. The idea of the ideal marriage is how much Jesus loves the church. I just mean if Jesus is willing to die for the church, a man should love his wife that much! I realize the topic of marriage is a lot more complicated than that, but this is the foundation of how the marriage is pleasing to God and that's the great example of how to live as God desires!