

Study 7: Chapter 5

Introduction

Whilst recognising that we are involved in a war between God and Satan, Paul encourages us to “hang in there” with a call to Godly living. We need to prepare ourselves by exercising the practical aspects of christianity in our lives, and not giving place for Satan to use us.

If Christianity does not result in changes in our lives, then we have either missed the point, or we have not grasped the message.

Apostasy is coming: “hang in there”. In the next chapter Paul tells us how to prepare ourselves.

Body of the Study

Walking as God’s People

Do’s and Don’ts

Marriage Illustrates Christ and the Church

Homework and preparation for next week:

Read the notes as a review of the study

Think about the people you would like to imitate. What is it about them that inspires you? How will these people help you draw closer to God? Think about the ways that you can improve to imitate those who lead you to God. Importantly, how are you acting as an example in your life to help others grow closer to God?

How do you feel about the idea of submission? How do you practice this in your life? What are the barriers that stop you from submitting further?

Read chapter 6 in preparation for next week

Notes for study 7: Ephesians Chapter 5

The Roman Empire was approaching the peak of its decadence, typified by the sexual immorality, Caesar worship, and corruption. The Greek culture was also filled with such immorality. In Ephesus itself the Temple worship of Diana embraced temple prostitution.

Paul makes a great contrast between “our former ways” “the ways of the world” and how we ought to live now as God’s people. He has already made these arguments in the first two chapters, but he now gets down to the nitty-gritty on a practical basis.

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"Artemis of the Ephesians" is mentioned only in Acts 19:24-35 ("Diana" in JB, KJV, NEB), and her myths were of a very different sort. Her silver "shrines" (19:24) were little "temples" containing an image of Artemis as imagined by the Asiatics, a combination of the Greek virgin goddess with the many-breasted and lewd Semitic moon goddess Ashtoreth. For the Ephesians, Artemis was the great Asiatic nursing mother of gods, men, animals, and plants, and was the patroness of the sexual instinct. Her images, instead of being artistically beautiful like those of the Greeks, were ugly, more like the lascivious images of India and Tyre and Sidon. Her special worship was centered in the great temple at Ephesus, probably because of the discovery of a very interesting stony meteorite that supposedly fell from heaven (19:35). The feasts of Diana were commercialized, and among the silversmiths there was a large industry dedicated to making shrines and idols for her worship. The preaching of Paul interfered with this commerce and aroused violent opposition. (NIV Bible Dictionary).

Walking as God’s People

We are instructed to live our lives as a fitting image of the way Christ lived “...*Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children*² *and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God...*” (5:1-2 NIV). As children of God, we ought to try to imitate our heavenly father in the same way that a young child wants to imitate his physical father. The instruction follows on from the instruction in chapter 4 (vs 1-6), but he adds that we ought to *live a life of love* rather than just *bearing with one another in love*. He wants us to have total love for our brethren – as well as for the Lord – so that our whole life and demeanor is *characterized by love* (Jn 13:34). However, Paul now gets down to the practicalities.

There are things that we must bring under control in our lives, which are the antithesis (opposite) of what it means to be a christian. “...*But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people...*” (5:3 NIV). These things are practiced by the “world” and God will judge them for their deeds. Our responsibility is to judge those in the church, who are doing these things (1 Cor 5:9-13).

Do’s and Don’ts

Although christianity is not a rule-based system, Paul gives us what is essentially a list of “do’s and don’ts” that describes the behaviour that we ought to exhibit as christians. Notice the contrasts in the list between the “do’s” and the “don’ts” “...*Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*⁵ *For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*⁶ *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.*⁷ *Therefore do not be partners with them...*” (5:4-7 NIV). The practices are “worldly” and describes the way we might have lived

outside of Christ – although that is not to say that we did *all* of these things – but we can certainly relate to *some* of them.

Paul says that we *are not to be partners with (those who practice) these things*. As Christians we live *in the world*, and we live as a part of the society in which we live, but we are not to be *of the world*. Notice what Jesus says “...*If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you* (In this case the Apostles: GO) *out of the world. That is why the world hates you...*” (Jn 15:19 NIV). “...*You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God...*” (Js 4:4 NIV). When we participate in the ways of the world – behaving in exactly the same way that they do – then we are no different than they are. If we are doing the same thing, we are “partners with them” in our actions! (*Partakers with them* NKJV). Paul calls us to faithfulness and to righteous living. If we are God’s people, why would we live as children of Satan? We need to make the *big changes* in our lives, and “*put the old man to death*”

Our former lives “put off”	Our new life in Christ “replace with”
Lying Unresolved anger (Evil desires towards others) Stealing Unwholesome talking Bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander Unwholesome speech and talk Darkness Fruitless deeds of darkness Unwise Foolish Drunkenness (filled with <u>a</u> spirit)	Speak the truth Anger without sin Do not give place to the devil Working and giving to those in need Graceful speech that builds others up Kindness, compassionate, forgiving Giving thanks to God Light (live as “children of light” = “children of God”) Fruit of Spirit (light NIV) goodness, righteousness and truth Wise (regard for opportunities) Understand God’s will Filled with <u>the</u> spirit: (admonishing one another) with singing Giving thanks to God Submitting to one another Love our husbands & wives

The contrasts continue with *darkness and light* as we saw in the last study. “...*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light*⁹ *(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)*¹⁰ *and find out what pleases the Lord.*¹¹ *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*¹² *For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.*¹³ *But everything exposed by the light becomes*

visible,¹⁴ for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you..." (5:8-14 NIV). We should not even involve ourselves with a *passing interest* in the works of Satan, but rather keep right away from them.

Paul reiterates the insistence of v. 3 that the abominable things pagan profligates do under cover of secrecy must not be breathed among Christians. Sometimes sin can be publicized by a reaction against it. What has been done in the dark is best kept dark. Paul goes so far as to say that the shameful of these ugly vices may rub off on Christians if they are continually talking about them, even if it is to disapprove of them. (NIVBC).

Our call is to live our lives the way Christ lived "...*Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise,*¹⁶ *making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*¹⁷ *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is...*" (5:15-17 NIV). We need to be very circumspect about our lives, and make the most of the opportunities that present themselves to us – especially when we have the opportunity to share the gospel with others.

The next group of instructions get practical and specific "...*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit...*" (5:18 NIV). Drunkenness is expressly forbidden. It causes us to lose our self-control. [Whilst I write as a person who has never knowingly drunk alcohol in my life, I must say that the scriptures do not expressly condemn drinking alcohol *per se*. But it does condemn taking *too much* alcohol! If I chose to drink, how would I know if I have had too much? What if I become addicted to it? What if I gained a "liking for it" and had too much? Alcohol causes much grief and cost in the community, but that is nothing compared to the spiritual and eternal cost "...*The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;*²⁰ *idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions*²¹ *and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.* I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God..." (Gal 5:19-21). So, before you drink alcohol, think about the consequences. It might not just cost you here-and-now, it cost you eternally! My choice is to *not go there!*].

Paul warns against the folly of overindulgence in strong drink. Drunkenness was all too common in the pagan world, and cautions in the NT show that it presented a serious temptation to Christians. The danger of drunkenness (Gal 5:21) lies not only in itself but in what it may induce. "Debauchery" (GK G861) in the NT means the type of wild living that characterized the prodigal son (Lk 15:13). In classical Greek it signified extravagant squandering both of money and of the physical appetites. Christians will avoid all such excess. Instead of continuing in drunkenness, believers must go on being "filled with the Spirit." That is a surprising alternative. We might have expected the apostle to plead for abstinence as over against intemperance. But he takes a more startling and positive line. He urges his readers to draw on the reinvigorating resources of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit produces a genuine exhilaration others vainly seek from alcohol. On the day of Pentecost the effect of such an experience was mistaken for drunkenness (Ac 2:13). "With the Spirit" is actually "in spirit"; the Greek text does not indicate whether the Holy Spirit is intended. However, it seems probable that Paul intended the Spirit, in view of the many other scriptural references to being filled with the Spirit. (NIVBC).

The instructions are also positive "...*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,*²⁰ *always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...*" (5:19-20 NIV). This passage, along with Col 3:16 (and others) give us the instruction and the authority to sing as we worship God. It is clear that this is an instruction *for the church* because we are to do it *to one another*. But, we need to look very carefully at the instruction. The instruction is for us to *sing*. It does not say anything about adding instrumental music (playing) to what we are to do. In fact, Paul is quite specific about the place that the music comes from - *Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord*. The music that we bring to God needs to originate in our hearts. There is not authority or example in the scriptures for music that originates in man-made instruments. This is precisely the reason that we practice aCapella music in worship. As an interesting aside, the literal translation of aCapella

means *in the manner of the chapel* or “the way we sing in church”. We must not go beyond our God given authority by adding things that God has not authorised.

Marriage Illustrates Christ and the Church

The discussion centres around the relationship between Christ and the church, but before that Paul builds towards our relationship with our fellow brethren. We must be mindful of the needs of other people, and not be self-centred. The discussion centres around submission “...*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ...*” (5:21 NIV). The first group that we need to submit to, is to our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is not about *our* needs, it is about us meeting the needs of others.

The second group discussed is the relationship between husbands and wives “...*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.* ²³ *For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.* ²⁴ *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything...*” (5:22-24 NIV). Whilst the wives are to be submissive, that does not give the husband *carte blanche* to “control” the wife as a slave. In fact, it puts a great deal of responsibility on the husband to ensure that he treats his wife with due regard, and proper respect. “...*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...*” (5:25 NIV). If husbands have the same kind of selfless and total (*agape*) love for their lives that Christ has for the church, then the submission of the wife to their husbands should not be a problem. It will result in the most intimate, strong, and honourable of loving relationships.

The prime example is how Christ loved the church – the bride of Christ – so that He might redeem it as His called out body of people “...*to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,* ²⁷ *and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless...*” (5:26-27 NIV). As members of the church (ie, as christians), we are made holy (set apart as God’s people), by being washed with water (ie through baptism) through the word. Being dipped in water in and of itself will not achieve anything – it would just be going swimming, or taking a bath. It is when we are baptised in response to the commands of God, that we come in contact with the blood of Christ. As a result, our sins are forgiven, and we become free from the stains of sin in our lives – *holy and blameless*.

Paul comes back to the practical relationships between husbands and wives “...*In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.* ²⁹ *After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it...*” (5:28-29 NIV).

Lest the staggering implication of what he has affirmed should fail to register with his readers, Paul puts it in another way to avoid ambiguity. So intimate is the relationship between man and wife that they are fused into a single entity. For a man to love his wife is to love himself. She is not to be treated as a piece of property, as was the custom in Paul's day. She is to be regarded as an extension of a man's own personality and so part of himself... Everyone cares for his or her own body and cherishes it. This is how Christ loves his body, the church He appeals to the same principle when addressing husbands as he did when addressing wives. Just as wives are to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ, so husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church. (NIVBC).

All of this is a two-way illustration of the relationship between Christ and the church. A man is to love and cherish his wife “...*just as Christ does the church--* ³⁰ *for we are members of his body...*” (5:29-30 NIV). We can identify with the relationships between husbands and wives, which helps us to understand the relationship between Christ and the church. As we grow as

christians, and have the deeper understanding of Christ and the church, it helps us to understand how to apply that deeper relationship to our marriages – a two-way illustration!

Marriage goes back to the beginning with Adam and Eve, and Paul reiterates what God said at the time of that marriage. This is the essence of marriage “...*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh...*” (5:31 NIV). Marriage involves three things:

- Leaving – We need to “cut the apron strings”, and we must not take our families into the marriage.
- Cleaving – We need to be united as husbands and wives as we form a new family unit.
- One Flesh – Which involves a sexual union – but it also involves more than just sex. Further, *two will become one flesh*. We only need to identify how many people are in the *one flesh* relationship to help us sort out the “issues” of marriage & divorce.

Paul spells out the purpose of the discussion “...*This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church...*” (5:32 NIV). Whilst these things might be quite plain and clear to us, this was not so in the first century. Remember that the Jews thought that the Jewish religion (and not the church) was God’s eternal plan. Paul reminds us that the church was always God’s plan for man, and the Jewish religion was just a step along the way.

With regard to Ge 2:24, the more profound truth now revealed is that in order for Christ, the husband, to win his bride, the church, he had to sacrifice himself for her on the cross (v. 25). Paul does not add the words “but I am talking about Christ and the church” as if he has been diverted from his theme. Rather, he is saying that so far as he is concerned, he refers the mystery to the relation between Christ and the church--a mystery into which he himself had been given unusual insight because of the revelation entrusted to him. (NIVBC).

Christianity is a practical religion – with practical and real outcomes as we develop relationships with each other. Those relationships are deepest between a husband and wife. “...*However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband...*” (5:33 NIV).