

1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14  
 Psalm 111  
 Ephesians 5:15-20  
 John 6:51-59

Ephesians 5:15  
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## LOOK CAREFULLY THEN HOW YOU WALK

For the past five weeks our lesson has been taken from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. More recently we have discussed Chapters 4-6, which set down man’s response to God’s grace in Christ, mostly in terms of how we behave and get along with each other. These chapters are full of help and guidance in that respect.

To prepare for today’s discussion, review Eph 4:22-24: *Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*<sup>1</sup> The new nature, which is life free of bondage to sin, belongs not only to special saints, but to you and every believer. The new nature is not something we must invent or attain on our own. It has already been created for you *after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*. You receive this nature as Christ’s life is *formed in you*. Paul described himself as being “in travail” until this was true of those in the church (Gal 4:19). Indeed, the primary issue in our discussion so far has been that the *new nature* the Bible speaks of is not something you generate on your own; it is the very life of Christ, who comes to you and *makes his home with you* when you begin to love him and surrender your life to him. Jesus said, “*If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him*” (John 14:23).

We have seen how impossible it has been for us to “no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds” (Eph 4:17) – to “put away all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander and instead be kind to one another” (Eph 4:31-32) – without having experienced the new birth that comes from surrendering our lives to Christ. But the very fact that these commands are in the Bible indicates that they *are* possible for us to obey in Christ. Jesus said, “*You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (Matt 5:48), and nothing less than perfection is what God has promised to accomplish in each of us who have believed in his Son.

Eph 5:3-14. *But fornication and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. <sup>4</sup>Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup>Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup>Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup>Therefore do not associate with them, <sup>8</sup>for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light <sup>9</sup>(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup>and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup>For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; <sup>13</sup>but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. <sup>14</sup>Therefore it is said, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.”*

- Verses 3-14 follow the passage we discussed last week and precede this week’s passage. They are worth discussing as a reminder that every person is born with free will, able to make choices, and rebellion against the will of God is not only possible but prevalent in the world today as it has been since the beginning.

- *Therefore do not associate with them, for once you were darkness ...* (v.7-8). The Bible’s solution regarding this problem of living in the midst of rebellion against the will of God is clear: *do not associate*

<sup>1</sup> Bible quotations are from the RSV.

with them. Discuss Psalm 1 which begins, “*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night ...*” What reasons does the psalm give for not associating with people who “walk in darkness?”

Nevertheless, this idea may seem surprising and even “unchristian” when we consider that Jesus had a reputation of associating with “tax collectors and sinners,” in other words, people who lived immoral lives. The scribes and Pharisees asked him, “*Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?*” Jesus answered, “*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*” (Luke 5:30-32). Why cannot we respond in the same way?

The answer comes in the saying, “*... for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord*” (v.8). The Bible says *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever* (Heb 13:8). You are not. When Jesus spent time with immoral men and women, either they would turn from their sins and follow him, or they would leave. When you spend time with immoral men and women, there are other possibilities.

- *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them* (v.11). We have seen why the first part of this is necessary; the second part is also worth discussing in the light of v.12-14. The NLT rendition is, *it is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them ...*, which suggest that when we see unlawful or immoral actions, we *let them be exposed* rather than *expose them* ourselves as the RSV suggests. After all, Jesus said, “*Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known* (Luke 12:2). And also, 1 Cor 4:5 says, “*Do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.* Discuss examples where you see evil and decide to let it come to light on its own rather than expose it yourself, and vice-versa. What is your main guide in these situations, which the world does not have?

Eph 5:15-20. *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the most of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup>addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, <sup>20</sup>always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.*

- *Look carefully then how you walk* (v.15). This short section, v.15-20, is today’s epistle lesson. The word “then” is like “therefore” – it advises us to look back at verses 3-14, because it is in the light of these verses that Paul urges the church to look carefully at its daily life, so as not to get drawn into the stream of modern society, which ignores whatever commands of God it judges to be overly strict or no longer relevant. We *walk carefully* through this life, as a troop walks carefully through a minefield.

- *Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is* (v.17). These things are mutually exclusive. If you understand what the will of God is, you are not foolish. If you don’t, you are.

- *Be filled with the Spirit* (v.18). The essence of human nature is the mind, which is constantly occupied with conscious streams of thought. *Cogito, ergo sum* (I am thinking, therefore I exist)<sup>2</sup>. The Bible says you can control these thoughts – refuse to allow some and encourage others. Being *filled with the Spirit* means having the mind of Christ. *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus ...* (Phil 2:4-5); *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things* (Phil 4:8).

- *Always and for everything giving thanks ...* (v.20). The rest of the passage – addressing one another in psalms and hymns, etc., suggests the excitement and joy among people in the first-century church, who had suddenly and unexpectedly realized the benefits of God’s grace – grace which has made redemption and salvation available to all who are reborn in Christ Jesus. May we all receive this wonderful grace of God!

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<sup>2</sup> Rene Descartes, 1596-1650.