

Ephesians 5:1-14

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[0 : 00] second half of the book, and we're looking at chapter 5, verses 1 to 14. Let me read these verses for us. Paul's words to the Ephesians and God's words to us.

Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among saints.

Let there be no filthiness, nor foolish talk, nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is covetous, that is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them. For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true, and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them, for it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Let's pray. God of love and light, we thank you that you have shown your love to us in your son Jesus Christ in his death on the cross, and you've shined your light upon us through his resurrection. We pray that you would help us as we look into this passage tonight. Teach us. Lord, speak to each one of our hearts as with what you alone know that we need. Remind us of who you are. Pray that you would, I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts would be pleasing in your sight. For you are our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

So a couple of weeks ago, we talked about the theme of transformation. And I started with three examples, and I'm going to start with them again tonight. So the first example of transformation is, I want you to think of an ugly gray caterpillar crawling on the ground, slowly moving forward with its, I don't know how many legs. And then it crawls into this gray cocoon that doesn't really look like anything worth noticing. And then it emerges as a beautiful butterfly soaring through the air, spreading its wings.

[2 : 58] Second example, think of a child who's alone and hungry and afraid because they have no family to care for them.

They've been left all alone in the world to fend for themselves. And then that child is brought into a loving and stable home where all their needs are met. Or think about an athlete.

Traded from a losing team where everyone's miserable and everyone's arguing with each other and everyone's lazy and blaming each other all the time. Traded to a team that's unified and hardworking and everyone has each other's back. And because of that, they're a winning team. Now here's a problem, right? When a caterpillar turns into a butterfly, it's a pretty clean transformation. It's once and done. Right? The butterfly doesn't fly around with a caterpillar's cocoon on its back.

Doesn't pretend to be a caterpillar again. Right? It's transformed. And that's, it's a new creature. But when we human beings experience transformation, it's never quite so clean and simple. Right?

[4 : 11] We carry our past with us. We carry those cocoons and that caterpillar skin on our shoulders. Right? We carry our memories, our habits, our fears, our burdens, guilt and shame.

Sometimes we go back. Often very quickly we go back to our old mindsets and our old habits and our old attitudes. Now what the apostle Paul has been saying in this book of Ephesians is that spiritual transformation is possible and it's a reality for everyone who has put their faith in Jesus

Christ as Savior and Lord.

Paul says you become a new person like a caterpillar that's been transformed into a butterfly. You become a new creature. You have a new self, a new identity.

You're also part of a new family. You're a child in the family of God. Jesus Christ is your brother. You can call God Father and know that you have a heavenly Father who is looking out for you, who loves you and who will never leave you.

And finally, you're on a new team. Right? Like the athlete. You're on a mission to the world. And Paul says this transformation that Christ can give is as real and complete and deep and life-changing.

[5 : 30] It's almost as if you've been reborn. But it takes time for us to grow up into that transformation, right? To live out and live into that transformation that God has given us in Christ.

Just like it takes time for a newborn child to develop into a full-grown adult. I mean, think about a newborn child for a minute. What can a newborn child do? It can lay down and maybe flail, right? Do a little bit of this. It can't even sit up, right? If you try to put the newborn child and just sit them up right next to you, I wouldn't do that, right? They're going to fall over.

Right? But eventually, after a few months, the child learns to sit up. And sit up without just tumbling over. And then they start to sort of move around and crawl around and pull themselves up.

And one day, they take their first step. You know, my wife and I had a friend come visit us in town this weekend. And we remembered that it was at her house that our daughter took her first step, right?

[6 : 41] It's something that you notice and you remember as a parent when that happened. When your child took their first step. And after that, they learned to stand firm on their own two feet and grow up into an adult.

Right? Now, that's the progression that you see in the book of Ephesians. Okay? The Apostle Paul is using this as an image for how God has made us new creatures in Christ.

He says, first we learn to sit. Then we learn to walk. And finally, we learn to stand. So chapter 2 of Ephesians says, We are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

God has raised us up with Christ. He's given us new life. He's welcomed us into his family. He's called us not just temporary guests or visitors, but beloved children. Who belong to him forever.

And that's what chapters 1 to 3 of Ephesians are all about. It's about being seated in your identity in Christ. Learning to rest in what Christ has done for you. And know that you have a solid foundation to rest on.

[7 : 48] And you can praise God for all that he's done for you. You can pray to him with confidence. Then Paul goes on. He doesn't just talk about being seated in Christ. He also talks about learning to walk in Christ.

And that word walk appears five times in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 verse 1 says, Walk according to the calling you have received. Chapter 4 verse 17, he says, You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

That is, as people who don't know God. And then in our passage today, verse 2, Walk in love as Christ loved us. And verse 8, walk as children of light.

And finally verse 15, which we'll get to next week, Walk not as unwise but as wise. Right? So what Paul's doing is he's taught us what it means to sit, to rest in our identity in Christ.

Now he's teaching us to walk. And finally, he's going to get us in chapter 6, he's going to say stand. And that doesn't just mean sort of stand there. But stand firm and fight the spiritual battle that is waging in and around us every day and fight it with spiritual weapons, the armor of God.

[8 : 57] The resources that God has given us to fight the spiritual battles and stand firm. So sit, walk, stand.

That's the book of Ephesians in three words. I didn't make it up. It was a Chinese Christian pastor who pointed that out. So I'm just stealing his outline of Ephesians. Right? But today we're talking about the Christian walk.

How to walk as people who have been made new in Christ. And Paul is a bit like a proud parent. Right? Teaching your children to walk.

And wanting to guard them from dangers. And wanting to point them in the right direction. Now, before we jump into this passage, what it means to walk in Christ, let me just point out, Paul's speaking to people who have been made alive in Christ, who would say, I believe in Jesus as my

Savior and Lord, and I belong to him.

Now, some of you, some of you might say, you know, honestly, I'm not quite sure about that. I'm not quite sure. You know, maybe you're skeptical.

[10:09] Maybe you have a lot of questions. Is God real? Why should I trust the Bible? Why is there so much pain and suffering in the world? Maybe there's questions. And those questions, you'd say, you know, I don't know about trusting Jesus.

I have a lot of questions. I need to deal with those. Maybe you're curious. You just want to learn more. Maybe you're seeking. Maybe you feel like, I really need some spiritual change, some spiritual transformation in my life.

And that's why I've come here. But I don't even quite know how to get it. Right? I'm not quite there yet. But I want it. And so if that's you, if you're in any of those categories, what we'll see tonight in this passage is really a picture of what your life could become through faith in Jesus Christ.

And we'll talk about how you can make that first step towards faith in Christ.

But wherever you are, yeah, wherever you are, we're glad you're here tonight.

[11:18] So two main points in this passage. How we are to walk. All right, first of all, in verse one to seven, we'll see we're to walk in love because Christ loved us and laid down his life for us on the cross.

And second, verse eight to 14, we're to walk in the light, the light that Christ has shined on us through his resurrection. So if you notice, this passage begins with the cross of Christ.

Christ gave himself up for us and it ends with the resurrection. And really that's the heart of how we experience that transformation is by looking to Jesus and seeing what he did when he died on the cross and saying, I believe in you that you died on the cross for my sins and believing that he rose again and that he's alive today.

And so that's the heart of it all. So walk in love and walk in the light. We're gonna look at those points tonight. That's what we're gonna focus on.

So first, verse one and two, therefore be imitators of God as beloved children. Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

[12:31] All right, so we see both the love of God the Father and the love of God the Son here just in these two verses. It is, but Paul has already prayed in Ephesians that we would know the love of Christ.

That we'd know how high and how wide and how deep and how long is his love. He prayed that in chapter three. You know, knowing the love of Christ makes all the difference.

All right, I mean, doesn't it make all the difference if you know that there is one person in the world who loves you and who would even give up their life for you? It makes all the difference in the world, whether that person's a parent or a close friend or a spouse or whoever they might be.

It makes all the difference in the world to know that you are loved securely and completely. And Paul says, ultimately, Jesus Christ is the one that you can be secure in his love for you.

And we can see Christ's love in a lot of ways. You can read the Gospels and see Christ's love in his healing ministry and how he interacted with people on the margins of society and how he treated little children who were sort of despised and ignored in his day.

[13:47] How he treated lepers, tax collectors, all kinds of people. You can see his love in his relationships and his interactions with them. You can see his love in his humble service, how he washed his disciples' feet.

He did the thing that nobody wanted to do. He did the task that was a servant's job, to get out a bucket of water and a towel and wash some people's feet who had been walking through streets where horses and cows and whatever other animals just left their stuff in the middle of the street, right?

It wasn't pleasant to wash people's feet back then. There could be all kinds of stuff on them. They weren't protected by sneakers. It was sandals, right? You can see Christ's love in all these ways, that he gets down and dirty to love and serve his disciples, but the ultimate way we see Christ's love is in his death on the cross, that he gave his life for us, that he was willing to go to that extent to show the fullness of his love.

And thinking about where he came from, that he came from heaven and glory and honor and freedom, and he chose to limit himself, to come down and take on a human body and be crucified in a place of, and receive shame and pain and rejection, and to do all that as a sacrifice for us so that

we could be reconciled to God and so that we could be accepted into God's family forever. So knowing the love of Christ, knowing that it's for you, Paul says it's for us. In Galatians he says, Christ loved me and gave himself for me. You can say both, right? [15:40] To know the love of Christ is for you, personally, individually, and to know that it's for all of us, for the whole family of God. Knowing the love of Christ makes all the difference.

And so Paul says, walk in love. The cross of Christ defines true love. It's self-giving for the good of another. And then Paul goes on, in verse three to seven, to give some very strong warnings. Verse three, he warns against sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness. That just means greed. Verse four, he warns against filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking. All right, so we see outward actions, inward desires, and speech. All those different categories. And Paul says, these things must not even be named among you. Another translation says, there must be not even a hint of these things.

And the reason that Paul would give, is Paul would say, none of these behaviors reflect Christ's self-giving love. Instead, they're self-gratifying and self-indulgent ways of life.

[16:54] Living at the expense of others, instead of for the good of another. So Paul warns, so we need to, let's look at, we need to look at these warnings. Paul warns against sexual immorality and all impurity.

Now, the Christian teaching is that in God's design, sexual intimacy is exclusively reserved for married couples.

Now, when I say that sentence, you might think, or most people, right, most people today would think, right, maybe some of you, and especially anybody who's, who's not in church today, would think, what?

Right? 80 to, you know, what is it? Like 80 to 90% of college students have sex before they graduate. You know, I won't go into statistics, right? The question today is, do you go for a one-night stand?

Do you do the more respectable thing and practice serial monogamy? Or do you have an open relationship by mutual agreement? Okay, so, and many people assume to be a, especially to be a young, healthy adult, and to choose not to have sex, because you're not married means you're repressive or afraid or really socially awkward.

[18:05] Right? So, I just want to acknowledge up front, this teaching sounds crazy to many people. But here's the reason for the Christian teaching about sex.

Christian teaching is basically this, that sex is not just a form of mutual entertainment. Sex is when you give your body completely and without reservation to someone else in the most intimate and vulnerable way.

And sexual intercourse bonds two people together. And that's exactly what you do when you make a vow, a promise to someone else in marriage.

For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part, I pledge to you my faithfulness. That's what you're doing. You're giving yourself to someone else without reservations, without holding anything back, in the moment, you're being, you're saying, here I am, all of me, for you.

And that is self-giving love. And in that context, sex makes sense. It means I would marry you all over again tonight. It's a good and joyful thing.

[19:18] It's pleasing to God. In fact, God commands married couples to take delight in one another, including one another's bodies. You can read Song of Solomon or read Proverbs chapter five. But if you haven't made that marriage promise, I promise to be with you and for you, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, then having sex with someone else is telling them a lie.

Because you're saying one thing with your body, I'm giving you everything I have. I'm not holding anything back. But actually, you haven't done that.

Because you're holding back your independence, your freedom, to break up anytime you want.

You're probably holding back your money. Probably haven't merged your bank accounts.

And so Paul says, sex outside that bond of marriage is not really self-giving for the good of another. It's self-gratifying.

It's taking when you haven't fully given to someone else. It's looking at someone and wanting them, but not fully giving yourself to them.

[20 : 34] It may be exciting. It may feel life-giving. But Paul says, that is not God's design. And so Paul warns about that. Paul says, there must not be even a hint. So whether it's adultery, or fornication, pornography, lusting, self-gratifying, none of these practices, Paul says, express the self-giving love of Christ.

And so Paul warns against them. Paul also warns against greed, covetousness. Now some people think Christians are only concerned about sex. Right?

And occasionally, right, you can find some Christian who gets quoted by some person in the media who seems like all they care about is sexual morality in America.

And that's the cause of our nation's decline. And it's the only thing we need to change. But the Bible is not myopic like that. The Bible is equally concerned about money.

Now greed, it's a little harder to define than sexual immorality, but it's just as pervasive. A couple of examples, or some statistics.

[21 : 51] American Christians who attend church at least twice a month give on average 6% of their after-tax income away.

More generally, just people who call themselves Christians generally, regardless of church attendance, give an average of 3%. The non-religious give away even less. But, so Christians do give a little bit more than average, it seems like, especially if you say your faith is important to you when you go to church.

But still, the Bibles in the Old Testament, the standard for giving was give away 10% as a sign of thankfulness to God, recognizing everything you have comes from God and saying, God, I'm going to give you the first fruits of what you have given me.

And it's interesting because this study is of American Christians, right? One of the wealthiest nations in the history of the world. And yet we give less percentage-wise than people in many other times and periods of history.

I think the percentage of giving was higher in the Great Depression than it is today. And more broadly, not just about what percentage of your income you give away, don't we all tend to compare ourselves to the people around us?

[23 : 14] Right? Most of us tend to hang out with people, at least some people, who are sort of in the roughly the same income bracket as us. And you can easily think, oh, well, I don't spend as much as they do.

I mean, they've got to, you know, their car is two levels more expensive than mine. You know, surely, surely I'm not greedy because look at them.

Most, so, along these lines, most Americans think of themselves as middle class. Only 2% of Americans call themselves upper class.

Now, if there's lower, middle, and upper, a third, a third, a third, right, then it doesn't make sense that only 2% of Americans would say, I'm in the upper third.

Right? We can easily deceive ourselves about money in all kinds of ways, how we think about ourselves, how we compare ourselves to other people, how we justify ourselves. And so, Tim Keller writes in his book, Counterfeit Gods, he says, we should all begin with a working hypothesis.

[24 : 25] This could easily be a problem for me. Jesus warned people far more often about greed than about sex, yet almost no one thinks they're guilty of it. If greed hides itself so deeply, no one should be confident that this is not a problem for them.

So, Paul warns us. He says, beware of greed. Jesus said, your life doesn't consist in the abundance of your possessions. Don't measure your life by how much stuff you have or don't have.

That's not ultimately what makes you truly rich. Finally, Paul warns against certain kinds of speech in verse 4.

Filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking. Right? Some types of conversation are just not profitable to engage in. Paul says, just don't go there. That kind of speech is not edifying.

It doesn't build anyone up. You're just tearing people down. Again, it doesn't show the self-giving love of Christ for the good of others. It's tearing people down. So, we should exercise discernment in how we speak and also what we listen to.

[25 : 41] Say, what movies you watch? What TV shows you watch? Now, I don't think there's a hard and fast rule. Some people are like, Christians should not watch R-rated movies. Well, there's a lot of R-rated movies that actually have a lot of good, have a lot of very thought-provoking messages.

And in fact, if you put the Old Testament to a movie, there are some episodes that would give it an R-rating. But I think we have to ask, is there a, what is the redeeming value to this TV show or this movie?

Or is it just filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking? And is that what I want to be filling my head with? Right? Paul says, try to discern what pleases the Lord.

Right? You've been loved, Paul says. That's where he starts. You've been loved. You are loved by Christ. He gave his life for you. And so walk in that love. You know, he gives us one thing.

He says, you know, avoid all these things. Avoid all these dangers, these traps. But instead, let there be thanksgiving. You know, Paul says, start there. Because gratitude fosters contentment.

[26 : 53] And gratitude helps us become wise. And gratitude helps us notice other people outside ourselves. Paul says, start with thanksgiving. Think about what you can be thankful for.

That's how Paul started the book of Ephesians. Right? The first half of chapter one is just thanking God for all the blessings, all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. And Paul says, think about that and thank God.

And that'll change your attitude. And it'll make you not feel like I need all this stuff that I don't have. And that maybe isn't mine to take. Paul says, start with thankfulness.

Because you are loved. So that's the first thing. Walk in love because of the cross of Christ.

Second, Paul calls us to walk in the light because of the resurrection of Christ. Paul warns, again, in verse five to seven, I'll just go through these very briefly.

[27 : 57] He warns that people whose life is defined or governed by those habitual practices have no inheritance in God's kingdom and the wrath of God is coming. Now, that doesn't mean that if you're a believer in Christ and you struggle with some of these sins or you fall into some of these sins, that doesn't mean that you're excluded from God's kingdom forever.

Right? The Bible says, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. But Paul calls us to walk in the light.

And part of walking in the light is just being open and honest and being truthful. So let's look at walking in the light, verse eight to 14. Paul begins by saying, at one time you were darkness, but now you're light in the Lord.

Right? He reminds us of the transformation that we've already experienced. You know, it's sort of like he's saying to the athlete who's been traded to this new team, he's like, remember, remember the team you used to be on and remember the habits you developed while you were on that team. And he's like, that's not you anymore. You're on a new team now. Think about the fear that you had. Right?

[29 : 20] As a, think about the child and think about how you were afraid and alone and hungry and you didn't know. You couldn't rely on anyone. And now, you're loved and you're accepted and you're wanted.

Paul says, remember who you were before you came to know Christ. All right? Even, remember, remember that at one time you were living in the darkness but now you're light in the Lord.

Right? We were all born in the darkness of sin. Right? Whether you grew up in the church, if there's never, maybe there's never a time that you didn't know Christ that you can remember. But we all have a sinful nature inside us.

Right? So we're, there's, this is true for all of us, not just people who have sort of a dramatic experience at one point in their life. So he says, remember what you were. You were darkness, now you're light. So walk as children of the light.

He talks about exposing the unfruitful words of darkness, bringing them into the light. You know, sometimes transformation doesn't look as dazzling as a caterpillar turning into a butterfly.

[30 : 33] Right? If you take the example of a child, a newborn child, it takes time for a child to grow up. It takes time for a child to learn to sit up and to walk and then to stand firm.

And you know, it takes time for us to grow as Christians. Right? Paul's, Paul's saying, you know, this isn't all going to happen all at once. It's a process. But we're together in that process.

And Paul ends with this verse which is adapted from the book of Isaiah where he says, Awake, O sleeper, rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.

The verse is from Isaiah. Isaiah 60 says, Arise and shine for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples but the Lord rises upon you.

His glory appears over you. If you look from verse 11 to verse 14, it starts with the unfruitful words of darkness and then being exposed by the light and then verse 14 becoming light.

[31 : 45] So it's a picture. Paul says, remember what you were. You were darkness and now you're light in the Lord. And then he says, you know what? If you walk in the light and if you walk in the love of Christ, other people may see.

The transformation that God is doing in you and they may also come into that light. Some who are now in the darkness might be attracted to the light and might enter the kingdom of God.

I mean, think about it. If all you saw every day was caterpillars walking around on the ground and you'd never seen a butterfly in your life, you would never believe that that caterpillar could turn into a butterfly.

but Paul says, as we walk in the light, right, as God continues his work in us, even though it's slow and takes time like a child growing up and learning to sit and learning to stand and learning to walk and learning to run and learning and finally growing up to be an adult.

Paul says, as we grow in Christ and gradually grow into the full-grown people that he's called us to be, our prayer is that, our prayer can be that others would see the light of Christ shining upon us and shining out through us and see his love and see his light.

[33 : 08] So walk in love because of the cross of Christ, walk in the light because of the resurrection of Christ. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you for these foundational truths, Lord, that you have loved us and given yourself up for us.

Lord, that in you we are loved. In you we are known. In you we are accepted. Lord, you see everything including our, Lord, our deepest secrets and yet you know us and you love us.

And Lord, you have shined your light upon us through your resurrection from the dead. Lord, in your resurrection from the dead we see that you are alive and you will reign forevermore and you have the power Lord, to take us from death to life, from darkness to light, from despair to hope.

Lord, from being self-focused and self-gratifying to being self-giving and loving. Lord, we pray that you would continue your work in each of us.

We pray that we would be rooted in the cross and the resurrection of Christ. Lord, that your love and your light would dwell in us and shine through us and Lord, that we would extend those mercies to others.

[34 : 39] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, now we're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper and share the bread and the cup that Jesus gave to us to remember.

To remember his death until he comes. To remember that he loved us and gave his life for us on the cross.