

FOLLOWERS OF GOD
Ephesians 5:1, 2

Intro: My text for today is the first two verses of chapter 5. (Read.)

Paul, at this point, was continuing with the practical section of this Epistle to the Ephesian church. He had been telling them how to walk, and how NOT to walk. Cf. 4:1-3 and 4:17-19. Here he added a third point, and before we have finished chapter 5 he will add a fourth and fifth exhortation as to how they were to walk.

Walking, of course, means living. Christians need instruction as to how they are to live. We can only learn that from the Word of God. The Scriptures are timeless in all that they have to say about the lives of the people of God. What Paul told the Ephesians in the first century is just as binding upon us today as it was upon them almost 2,000 years ago. The Christian life today is to be exactly what it was in those days. We are always hearing, and most often from professing Christians, that times are different today, and that the different times calls for a different life style. I hope you will never accept that kind of teaching because it just is not true! The more we abide by the Word of God, the greater will be our joy, and our witness to the world will have a greater impact. Christian living is not the way the world lives, only on a higher plane. We can see that from Paul's words in 4:17-19, which I have read. Christian living is distinctly different, and it behooves each of us as Christians to understand how it is that the Lord wants us to live.

So let us pay special attention to the words that we find here. Dr. Lloyd-Jones pointed out in his exposition of these verses that Paul could not have set the standards for the people of God any higher than he did here. Note, first of all, . . .

I. THE EXHORTATION: "Be ye therefore followers of God."

As practically everyone who has written on this passage has pointed out, and should point out, in speaking of being "followers of God," Paul used a word which has been transliterated into the English, and we have our word, mimic.

A mimic is one who imitates another. In the English it probably carries with it the idea of making fun of someone, or ridiculing him, by acting like that person does. A mimic is often a comic, or a clown.

But Paul was not trying to be funny. He was very, very serious. He was speaking of a matter that is of the utmost importance, and he was setting a standard which could not be any higher. He was saying that our lives should be patterned after God. We should be like God is. He is the One we are to mimic. Our lives should be a copy of His.

Can you think of anything more amazing and unbelievable than that? Who in his wildest imagination would ever think that this would be our aim as Christians--to be like God Himself.

We have laws in this country which keep us from copying certain things. A person's work is often protected by the copyright laws. And even where copyright laws do not apply, our consciences keep us from taking somebody else's work, but making it appear as though it were our own.

Preachers will often copy other preachers. They will copy their style of preaching, perhaps the way they speak. Sometimes preachers will even preach someone else's sermon. This we look down upon. A person who copies another is often judged as being insincere, not real.

But there are no laws in heaven which forbid our trying to be like God! In fact, we have before us today a commandment from God Himself in which it becomes clear that we are displeasing God, we are sinning against God, if we are not seeking to be like Him. We need to look at it that way. This is not just an option which you can take or leave. This is a commandment from God Himself, written by the Apostle Paul, "Be ye therefore imitators, mimics, followers, OF GOD!"

But let me point out another thing about this statement.

It probably will not surprise you when I tell you that Paul's word which is here translated, "Be," is better rendered, Become!

Now think about this for a moment. Paul was writing, not just to people who had just been saved. He was writing to them, but he was writing to the Lord's people who were in all stages of spiritual growth: some who were new in the faith, others who were mature, and then all who were in between. And he gave the same order to all of them!

What does this tell us?

This tells us that this was the direction in which the babes in Christ needed to get started. But it also tells us that the most mature had not reached the end of this road; there were still ways in which all of them needed to become more like God! That is true of all of us today.

But the word become also indicates that what they needed to be was not-at-all what they were when they were first saved. People are not naturally godly, like God. There may be some traces of evidence that we were originally created in the image and likeness of God, but it is usually very hard to find. So we can say that it is the will of God for each one of us to become just exactly the opposite of what we are by nature. Read again Eph. 2:1-3 and 4:17-19 if you need to be reminded of what you and I are by nature.

So great changes need to be made in our lives.

But I see another thing here.

If we are going to become like God, if He is the pattern of what we are to strive to become, **THEN IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE LEARN WHAT GOD IS LIKE!** The first, the continuing concern of every child of God, every day we live, is to learn all that we can about God so we will understand what we are to become.

Where do we find this knowledge? We find it in four places. We have some knowledge of God in our hearts. We can learn more from nature. Paul spoke of both of these in Romans 1. But we will never have an adequate knowledge of God unless we search for Him in the Scriptures, and there we see Him most clearly and most completely revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore we all need to be concerned about theology. Do not let anyone scare you away from theology. What is theology? Theology is the knowledge of God. It is the doctrine of Scripture. Every time we read our Bibles, or have the Bible read to us, or hear it taught, or hear a sermon preached from the Bible, the prayer of our hearts ought to be that the Lord would show us more of Himself. And, as we learn of Him, we are able to see what He wants us to be because we are to be like He is. This is the chief purpose of our salvation. Learn that now, and never forget it!

But let us move on. Note secondly . . .

II. THE REASON FOR SUCH A COMMAND: "As dear children."

Who are we? Who are you? Who am I?

We are, if we are true Christians--we are those who have been "born of God." Something very wonderful has happened to us. A miraculous change has taken place in our lives. God has done something for us; He has done something in us. By the wonder of His grace, we have been born into God's family. We are His children through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are no longer "the children of wrath"; we are the children of God! Cf. John 1:11-13.

We have eternal life. We have divine life, the life of God Himself. He is our life. Christ is our life. The Holy Spirit is our life. And that makes you, and makes me, as we think just now about who we are, very, very interested in being what God wants us to be. We have a long way to go, but we want to go on, and we look forward to the day when this work will be complete. Cf. 1 John 3:1-3.

It is to be expected, is it not, that, if we are God's children, we are going to be like He is--and that that is just what we want to be!

But can Paul be a little more specific? We realize that we are never going to be Deity. There will always be a difference between God and us. We are not omnipresent. We are not omniscient. We are not omnipotent. We are not eternal as God is. There are some attributes of God which belong to Him alone, and which we will never have.

What, then, did Paul have in mind?

He gave us here . . .

III. THE SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTIC.

He did this when he wrote in verse 2, "And walk in love."

Do you remember that twice in 1 John 4 that old Apostle taught us that "God is love." You have it in verse 8, and then again in verse 16. Verse 8 reads like this:

He that loveth not knoweth not God,
for God is love.

Verse 16b says this:

God is love;
and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God,
and God in him.

Whenever we think of the love of God, we need to think of other characteristics of God which go with His love. I

am thinking of His grace, His mercy, His longsuffering, His kindness, His tenderness and compassion. All of these are evidences of His love.

Now this tells us something about what it means to be a mimic of God. Love is not just an external characteristic, or quality of life. It is an internal attribute of God. If we are only pretending to love, we are hypocrites. That is not being like God. It is God's very nature to love, and we are making progress in our lives as Christians when love is the dominant thing about us. We do not love sin. We do not love the ways of the world. Some people speak of love as though we close our minds to everything that is wrong, and just love, love, love. Dr. McGee used to call that "sloppy agape."

We need help in understanding the love of God if we are to "walk in love," if this is to be the way we are to live.

Does Paul give us any help in seeking to define the love of God? Yes, he does. Note:

IV. THE EXAMPLE.

We have it in these words:

. . . as Christ also hath live us,
and hath given himself for us
an offering and a sacrifice to God
for a sweetsmelling savour.

Let me point out another very important fact about our text and the context of this verse.

One of the words that Paul used in verse 1 is the word, "therefore." This is one of those connecting words we have spoken about as we have come through this Epistle of Ephesians. It is there for a purpose. It ties verse 1 with verse 32 of chapter 4. There Paul was speaking about the fact that we should be "kind . . . tenderhearted, forgiving one another . . ." All of this speaks of love, does it not? But what was Paul example of what it means to be kind and tenderhearted and forgiving? It is to be seen in our salvation. It is displayed in the Gospel. Note the words, ". . . even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

How do you explain the fact that you are a child of God? How do I explain the fact that I am a child of God? It is all due to the love of God: His kindness, His tenderheartedness, His forgiveness.

In verse 2 of chapter 5 Paul went to the Cross, to the Gospel again. Do we want to know what it means to "walk in love"? Look at what Christ was doing when He died on the Cross! He was giving Himself "for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."

"A sweetsmelling savour" is a fragrant odor, like a very lovely perfume. This is the way God the Father looked upon the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. It was well-pleasing to Him. And will you note that this was the main purpose that the Lord Jesus Christ had in going to the Cross? Saving us was secondary! His main purpose was to please God. And we who are saved are the ones who have reaped much of the benefit of what Christ did.

That was what made the sweet savor offerings of the Old Testament sweet savor offerings. It was that they were pleasing to God! That always came first!

Why was the death of Christ called both "an offering and a sacrifice to God"? It was because it was, first of all, a voluntary offering, and, secondly, because it was the giving up of His life.

How does this help us to understand what it means to "walk in love" and to be "followers of God, as dear children." (I should have mentioned that "dear" in verse 1 is from the same root as "love" in verse 2.)

So how do we "walk in love"?

It has a twofold aspect.

It means being kind and tenderhearted and forgiving among ourselves. But first and foremost it means that our main concern in life is to give our lives doing that which pleases God, that we do it not because we are forced to do it, but we do it because we love God and want to please Him. That is our "offering . . . and . . . sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."

Concl: I ask you this morning, and I ask myself, is the great desire of our hearts to be like the Lord? Do we really want to mimic Him, to follow Him so as to be like He is? And are we learning that if that is to be the case, we must put Him first in our lives--first before ourselves, and first before others. If pleasing the Lord has priority with us as it did with our Lord Jesus Christ, then God will be glorified, others are going to be blessed, and we will rejoice to see the delight that is in our own hearts as we live in this world, walking in love.

UNBECOMING SINS
Ephesians 5:3-7

Intro: All children need to learn to walk. It is a very exciting time in the lives of parents, and probably, too, in the life of a child, when that child begins to walk. It usually means a lot of laughs, and a lot of falls and bumps before the art begins to take on any semblance of accomplishment. But everyone is pleased when success is attained.

Christians also need to learn to walk. This is usually more difficult than for babies to learn to walk physically because usually people who are Christians do not know that they need to learn to walk. And so they stumble through their lives, some of whom never learn to walk.

Paul, in his writings, always placed a strong emphasis upon walking. He usually devoted the latter half of his Epistles to this subject. He wanted the Lord's people to know how they were to live--and how they were not to live. He set before them examples. Sometimes he encouraged them to live the way he lived. But we are seeing here in this Ephesian Epistle that his emphasis upon walking was stronger than in any of his other Epistles. At least he used that verb, to walk, in this letter more than he did in any other letter. He told them how they used to walk, how they were to walk now that they were saved, and how they were not to walk! It is this latter point that we are going to be concerned with today.

We have seen how Paul has gone from the positive to the negative to the positive, and now back to the negative again. He had just told them to "walk in love." See verse 2. He had set before them two Examples--the Two greatest Examples that we could ever have. One was God (v. 1); the other was Christ (v. 2).

Now if we are to be "followers of God," and if we are to pattern our lives after the example of Christ, this not only means that we will be doing certain things, but that we will NOT be doing other things.

Neither God nor Christ was ever guilty of sin. It was impossible for them to sin. And it still is! We can sin even though we are the children of God, but we are to stay away from sin. Some day it will no longer be possible for us to sin (when we are with the Lord), but until then we need to be constantly on our guard against anything that the Bible tells us not to do. If God did not do it, and if Christ did not do it, then we should not do it--whatever it is that we might be talking about. If we follow God and Christ, we will

not be making the mistakes that we would otherwise make. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he indicated very clearly that he was following Christ, and he exhorted to follow him as he sought to follow the Lord. His words are in 1 Cor. 11:1,

Be ye followers of me,
even as I am of Christ.

So we need to follow Christ. We need to follow God. And we need to be looking around for those of the Lord's people who are seeking to follow Christ and God, and then follow them. If parents want their children to follow the Lord, then the parents must follow the Lord. If teachers want their class members to follow the Lord, then the teachers must follow the Lord. If a pastor wants his people to follow the Lord, then he must follow the Lord. If you have a friend who knows the Lord, and you want them to follow the Lord, then you must show them the way by the life that you live.

Today I want us to consider verses 3 through 7 of Ephesians 5. Here Paul concerned himself mainly with the way in which we are NOT to walk, the way we are not to live. I hope that all of you understand that, when Paul spoke of our walk, he was referring to the way we live. And that, in turn, would involve not only what we do, but what we are. However, since what we do reveals what we are, Paul was always speaking of the things that we do, or should not do.

So let me take my subject this morning as my first point. And we will call it:

I. UNBECOMING SINS (Eph. 5:3, 4).

Here Paul listed several sins. And he added to the list in verse 5, but we will get to that in a moment.

This list tells us two things:

- 1) From this list, added to what Paul had said before in this Epistle about their past lives, we can see that many of them had been saved out of lives of terrible sin.
- 2) Paul was telling them that, even though they were now saved, they still could commit these sins.

But he labeled them as not becoming to saints, and he also said that they were "not convenient." Notice the first statement in verse 3; the second in verse 4. What did he mean by these?

Unbecoming means that they are not fitting, or proper, or suitable for a Christian. They are not what you would expect a Christian to do. They are out-of-character for a Christian. I have called these UNBECOMING SINS, but

remember that every sin is unbecoming to a child of God. They are not acceptable behavior for a Christian.

But what about the term, "not convenient"? It carries much of the same idea as the word unbecoming. Here in verse 4 Paul was saying that this is not suitable behavior for a child of God. When you listen to a Christian talk, because he is a Christian you do not expect to hear him talking like people in the world talk. You expect better things from him. So Paul was saying that a big part of our walk is our talk.

So, if you count yourself as one of God's dear children (v. 1), then remember that there are things that are not right for you to do, and the Bible labels every one of those things as sin.

Let us look at the list Paul has made for us.

- A. "Fornication" -- This is the sin where you are involved in a sexual relationship with anyone but your husband or wife. The Greek word for fornication is formed from the same root as the Greek word for a harlot. It excludes sex before marriage, as well as any sexual relationship outside of marriage. It excludes any homosexual relationship.

God says "NO" to all of that.

- B. "All uncleanness" -- This word was used by Paul back in Eph. 4:19. This is the genus of which "fornication" is the species.

It is like Paul was saying that "fornication" is out, and so is everything else that falls into that category of behavior.

And then, almost as though Paul was stepping into another world, he added,

- C. "Covetousness" -- This was forbidden by the tenth commandment. It is defined in verse 5 as idolatry. Thus it speaks of the man who has left God out of his life, and who has in his place an intense desire for things, especially money, or things that have a monetary value. His object in life is to acquire things. Paul taught that "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10).

Paul concluded this part of the list by saying, "Let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints." Not only were the sins to be avoided, but there should not

even be any reason even to name among the people of God. Cf. Eadie, p. 370. Sins and saints have nothing in common. And the children of God should remember this.

But then Paul went on with his list in verse 4.

- D. "Filthiness" -- This is anything, either in speech or in act, which is opposed to purity. But Lenski believes that since the next two words have to do with speech, this one probably has to do primarily with filthy talk. This would apply to dirty stories, as well as to the use of dirty words.
- E. "Foolish talking" -- Trench calls this the "talk of fools" (p. 121). This is the person who has nothing to say, but he says it anyway. And often it leads to speech which is corrupt.
- F. "Jesting" -- The Bible is not against wholesome humor, but it is against talking which has a double meaning--words which can be taken in either a good or bad sense. If taken in the wrong way, then the speaker accuses the hearer of having an evil mind.

When we read this second list of sins, it is easy to see why James spoke so strongly against the sins of the tongue--that it sets on fire the whole body, and that, if a man can control his tongue, he will not have any trouble with the rest of his body.

All of these sins are to be avoided by the child of God, as unbecoming to them. These are common among unbelievers, but they are not to be identified in any way with the Lord's people.

But let us go on. Paul went on to point out:

II. THE SERIOUSNESS OF SUCH SINS.

Two things emphasize the meaning of such sins (and all others like them) when a person is continuously guilty of them.

The first is:

- A. They identify the person who is guilty of them (v. 5).

This verse takes us back to the three sins mentioned in verse 3. A "whoremonger" is a fornicator. So, if this is the way a person walks either in fornication and/or in uncleanness and/or in covetousness, you

know, without anyone having to tell you, that that person is not a Christian at all, and never has been! A Christian is a person who has been saved from sin and from sinning. As James said, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," i.e., he does not continue on in sin. A person who does, has never been born of God! And we all should know this, should know it without having somebody go to the trouble to prove it to us. If we understand what a Christian is, then we know that a person who keeps on sinning is not a saint!

But what was the other point that Paul made here.

- B. It is because of these things that the wrath of God will fall on sinners (v. 6).

The child of God is no longer a child of wrath. Cf. Eph. 2:3b.

Paul told the Roman believers that "being now justified by his (Christ's) blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9). The non-Christian has not been delivered. He is under the wrath of God. And he is going to be judged for his sins--fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthy talk, and everything else that is sinful in God's sight.

A child of God is not under wrath, and therefore is no longer under the bondage of those sins for which he formerly was condemned.

Those who say that those who have never received Christ are not going to be judged for their sins, do not know what they are talking about. Some people would like for us to think that Christ died for the sins of all men, and that if some do not accept Christ, then they will have to pay for those sins a second time. But what does this do to the righteousness of God? He does not demand double payment for sins. If men go to hell, it is because Christ did not put away their sins by His death. His death availed on for those whom He has appointed for salvation. If you are saved, or ever are to be saved, you can praise God in His grace that you are one for whom our Saviour shed His precious blood. He did not die in vain.

And so Paul said, "Let no man deceive you with vain words." Do not let men deceive you into thinking that men can escape the judgment of God even if they

go on sinning. And do not let men deceive you into thinking that a person can go on sinning and yet be a child of God.

And so, what is . . .

III. THE EXHORTATION WHICH FOLLOWS (Eph. 5:7).

(Read.)

Verse 7 should be read with verse 1 in mind. In v. 1 Paul told the believers at Ephesus to become "followers of God, as dear children." Here in v. 7 he told them not to become "partakers with them."

Paul was telling them that never, at any time, under any circumstances, were they as Christians to become involved, even to the point of tolerating such sinning, and certainly that they should never become involved themselves!

See Eph. 4:17. See also Eph. 5:11-13.

Cf. also 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1.

The Word of God is very clear on this point. We are not to associate with sinners in their sins. We are not to encourage them in their sins. We are not to make it easier for them to sin. Our lives are to be a constant reproof to them that they are walking in a way that is displeasing to God, a way that will ultimately bring the wrath of God upon them.

Concl: We hear a lot today about "lifestyle evangelism."

Usually this means taking on the lifestyle of the people we are trying to reach. Do what they do so they will not feel uncomfortable in your presence. I know of preachers who advocate even taking social drinks with non-Christians as a means of reaching them. When we were in California recently we learned that it is becoming increasingly the thing to do for believers to dance at wedding receptions--and this is at the wedding of those who profess to be Christians.

Where are we going to stop in our compromising? Anybody with any sense at all knows that there is no end to that road.

I believe that the Bible teaches a lifestyle evangelism, not a lifestyle of compromise with sin, but a lifestyle of holiness, a lifestyle in which we show what it means to be a new creature in Christ. We need to walk like God walks, to live like Christ lived. The greater our holiness, the greater will be our usefulness, and greater glory for God!

CHILDREN OF LIGHT
Ephesians 5:8-14

Intro: One thing that Paul states over and over again in this Epistle to the Ephesians is that there is a sharp contrast between the way that a person lives who does not know the Lord as his Savior as compared with the way a person lives who does know the Lord as his Saviour. Or to state it another way, he drew a sharp contrast between the way that the Ephesians to whom he was writing used to live, as compared with the way that they should be living now. Not all of them were living as they should, and that is one of the major reasons for the writing of this Epistle to them.

This contrast between lifestyles is not in any way limited to the Epistle to the Ephesians. You find it throughout the Word of God.

You can see it by comparing Cain and Abel in Genesis 4.

You can see it by comparing Noah with the people of his generation—all of whom perished in the flood with the exception of his immediate family.

You can see it in the life of Abraham.

You can see it in the way the Lord warned the Israelites about the Canaanites in the days of Moses and Joshua. The Israelites were not to live like the Canaanites did. It was because the Canaanites lived as they did that God judged the Canaanites and gave their land to the Israelites.

Think through the OT, and then go into the Gospels, and on into the Epistles of the NT, and you will find many, many illustrations of this fact, and many, many passages of Scripture which teach that the lives of the people of God are to be in sharp contrast with the world.

Two of the words that are used in Scripture to illustrate this contrast are the words "light" and "darkness." We have this in our text for today. Paul had pointed out that there was to be a difference between the people of God and the people of the world more than once before he got to 5:8 where we want to begin today, but these are the first verses in which we have had these two words used: "light" and "darkness."

(Read Eph. 5:8-14 pointing them out.)

The only other time we have the word "darkness" in this Epistle is in Eph. 6:12. (Read.)

We all know the difference between "light" and "darkness." We experience it every day. And we all know that our Lord's words in John 12:35b are true: "He that walketh in darkness knoweth not where he goeth." Earlier He had said, "But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (John 11:10). The Apostle John wrote these words, found in 1 John 2:10:

But he that hateth his brother is in darkness,
and walketh in darkness,
and knoweth not whither he goeth,
because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.

When it gets dark in the evening, the street lights come on, automobile lights come on, we turn the lights in our homes on. Why? Because we want to see where we are going, and we want to see what we are doing. We do not need the lights in broad daylight, but we do when it is night!

So it is true of everybody. It once was true of all of us. As long as we are in spiritual darkness, we do not know where we are going. Life remains a mystery as long as people are in spiritual darkness. People stumble through life, trying this and trying that, stumbling over this and then stumbling over that. Why? Because they are walking in spiritual darkness, but they do not know that they are in the darkness. It is not until someone brings them the light that they can see that there is a difference. Even then, multitudes prefer the darkness to the light, as our Lord said in John 3:19:

And this is the condemnation,
that light is come into the world,
and men loved darkness rather than light,
because their deeds were evil.

And so this brings out another meaning attached to the words "light" and "darkness": "Light" has to do with that which is right in God's sight; "darkness" has to do with that which is wrong, or sinful, in His sight. In fact, you will remember that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself said in John 8:12,

I am the light of the world:
he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness,
but shall have the light of life.

I hope you are getting an idea of what we are talking about when we speak about "light" and "darkness" as they are used in the Word of God. If it is not yet clear, I trust that the Lord will make it clear as we go along in our text.

Now look at our text.

If you will look at verses 3, 4, 5, and 6, you will see that Paul had been speaking of some things that are very wrong in God's sight. And he concluded all of that with the statement

that we find in verse 7. (Read.) And then he spoke of the change that had taken place in their lives. What was it?

I. THE CHANGE (Eph. 5:8a).

How did that change take place? Read Eph. 2:1-10.

God had changed them! He had not only taken them out of darkness into the light, but He had changed them from darkness into the light. This is the miracle of God's grace. This is what it means to be saved. This is what it really means to become a Christian, a child of God, a saint.

Now we all need to be sure of this. Has He changed you? Do you know that He has? You see, if you are a child of the light, you will love the light. You will have an entirely different outlook on life from what you had before. Before you did whatever you wanted to do, or at least whatever you could do. But you see now that that kind of a life was wrong, and that it led you into a lot of wrong things because you were walking in the darkness of this world, in the darkness of sin. But that is all different now since your heart has been changed from darkness to light by the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If this does not apply to you, then let me urge you to turn to Christ this very day. You cannot reform yourself. You need more than reformation; you need salvation. You need Christ to save you from the wrath of God which is upon you.

But what did Paul say after this? It was stated as . . .

II. A SOVEREIGN COMMAND (Eph. 5:8b).

"Walk as children of light."

If this change has taken place in your life, your daily life will show the difference. You may not be perfect, but you are going to be different! If you are not different, you have not been changed. There is not such thing in the Bible as a salvation that let you go on living like you lived before.

ILLUS:
ZACCHAEUS
IN LUKE 19:8
+ THE LORD'S
COMMENT
IN 19:9.

There is no doubt but that we can still sin, but it no longer gives us the pleasure that it once did. And it will be the prayer of our hearts that the Lord will keep us from sinning, and that He will enable us to live like "children of light" should live.

THE TRAGEDY OF OUR DAY: The church has become less and less Christian, and more and more like the world! God is really being ignored, and things are made to center around man. Canned music has introduced an atmosphere of superficiality which is patterned after the world's entertainment. People come to laugh and to be entertained, not to worship God and to learn of Him. To state it as briefly as I can, in the present-day church service, darkness prevails, not the light! And so what do you see when you look at people's lives, you do not see them walking in the light, walking as the children of light, but walking, living like people do who do not claim to know the Lord. Professing Christians may try to be respectable, and they may not go to the extremes that people go to in the world, but the self-centered, self-pleasing pattern is there. They have never learned what it means to "walk as children of light," and many professing Christians are not interested in learning what that means!

What does it mean?

III. WALKING IN THE LIGHT EXPLAINED--POSITIVELY AND NEGATIVELY.

A. What it means--positively (Eph. 5:9, 10).

To state it as briefly as possible, it means doing what is pleasing to the Lord, or better, doing what is well-pleasing to the Lord!

Paul stated it here as "proving . . ."

This is a Greek word which means testing, but not by trial and error as people do with their lives in this world of spiritual darkness where they know nothing of the light, but it means testing the things that you are told to do in the Word of God, but testing them with the certainty that you are going to find that the Scriptures are right in the way they direct you. You follow the Scriptures with the assurance that at last you are doing the right things, and headed in the right direction.

Perhaps before you have tried "on your own" to please the Lord, only to find out that you were walking in blindness and darkness. When the spiritual change takes place in your life, you are inclined toward the light of God's Word, not just hoping, but knowing, that you are doing what you should have been doing long before.

But Paul is a little more specific than I have been up to now. He mentioned that there are three things that we need to be concerned about, and he mentioned these in verse 9: "all goodness and righteousness and truth."

Probably the best reading of this text should be, not "the fruit of the Spirit," but the fruit of the light. This is the reading of the earliest MSS, and it is consistent with what Paul had been speaking about. However, it is only possible for us to do these three things by the power of the Spirit.

But let us look at these three words, and seek to find out what they mean.

1. "All goodness" — This is that moral quality which produces kindness, forgiveness, love—those things which Paul had been writing about. They are the evidence of a good God in the life of His child.
2. "And righteousness" — This is a life lived according to God's standards of what is right, in contrast with that which is evil.
3. "And truth" -- This is sincerity, genuineness, reality, the opposite of hypocrisy and false pretenses. We need to be gentle and right, but it has to come from the heart to be pleasing to the Lord.

These constitute what is pleasing to the Lord--gentleness, right-ness, and genuineness. And Lenski (p. 606) makes this excellent comment:

Truth, righteousness, goodness are not one thing in one age and another thing in another age. the only progress possible is to enter more deeply into these three. It is one of the lies of our time that we have progressed beyond them.

So our first concern, and really our only concern, as the "children of light" is to do that which is well-pleasing to God! Cf. Paul's statement in 2 Cor. 5:9.

But we need to go on, as Paul did, to . . .

- B. What it does not mean—negatively (Eph. 5:11a, 12).

Two things are indicated here:

1. We are not to participate with those who are

walking in darkness (v. 11a). To have fellowship with is to participate in. There can be no compromise with evil. We cannot go part of the way with the world. We do not do what others do to please them; we do what pleases God to win them.

2. We are not even to talk about what they do (v. 12). And so in this day of TV we should not even look at what they do, nor should we listen to what they say. To do so is disgraceful for a child of the light.

If we are occupied with what the world does, there is always the danger that we will become involved ourselves. Note the danger of pornography! Do not feel that you have to be up on the latest evils of the day. Learn about sin from your Bible, and you will be kept from sin, not lured into sin. Many Christians fail right here.

This brings me to my final point:

IV. OUR MISSION (Eph. 5:11b, 13, 14).

It is all summed up in one word: "REPROVE THEM."

This is the word used by our Lord in John 16:8 for the work of the Holy Spirit when He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. It means to put a person to shame by showing that they are wrong.

How do we do this--by our words, by our demonstrations, by trying to do what they do, only on a higher level? No, we reprove people by our lives--by our goodness, our righteousness, our genuineness. It is the light that reproves, and our lives are the light that the world sees. Only then will the people in darkness listen to our words. This is why the emphasis in Scripture is on our walk, the way we live. The Holy Spirit uses godly lives to reach ungodly sinners. If we fail there, nothing else will possibly succeed.

Where does v. 14 come in? How does it apply?

The Greek can be translated, Wherefore, it saith. What saith? When we walk as the children of light, our lives say, "Awake thou that sleepest . . ."

Concl: This is the true way of evangelism. Godly lives convict, and produce good fruit that remains.

WALKING CIRCUMSPECTLY
Ephesians 5:15-17

Intro: No Christian should need to be told that he ought to be telling others about Christ. He will feel that desire in his heart, for one thing. And it is very clearly taught in Scripture, for another thing. And the condition in the lives of people all around us is a constant reminder that people are not going to be changed until their hearts are changed. Only Christ, by the Gospel can do that.

But the sad fact remains that very few who claim to know Jesus Christ as their Savior are really seeking to win others to Christ. In many instances, the methods that are employed drive people away from us rather than getting them to listen to what we have to tell them about the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can never expect the Gospel message to be popular in the world, but the Scriptures tell us what we must do if we are to bear an effective witness to the people of the world.

As we concluded last Sunday with Ephesians 5:16 we had the opportunity to see that the mightiest force in getting people to listen to the Gospel message, and to be convicted by it, is the testimony of a transformed life. If our lives do not support our words, our words will be ineffective. Oh, sometimes the Lord may use the witness of a disobedient Christian, but that is the exception, not the usual way in which God works.

And so, Ephesians 5:8 tells us that we are to "walk as children of light." This means that we are, according to Ephesians 5:10, to be living so as to show what is pleasing to the Lord. This means living in accordance with the Word of God. Such a life convicts. Such a life is a testimony in itself. We will need to tell people about Christ, but God intends that people will become interested in the Gospel by seeing what God has done in our lives through Christ.

As we come to the verses which I want to consider with you today, we come to the fifth time that Paul used the word "walk" since the beginning of chapter 4. He started with what he wrote in 4:1-3. Then read 4:17. Thirdly we have his words in 5:1, 2. And then we come to 5:8. And, finally, the words of our text for today:

See then that ye walk circumspectly,
not as fools, but as wise,
Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
Wherefore be ye not unwise,
but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Let me remind you again that the word "walk" has to do with

the way we live. So we could translate verses 15 and following by saying,

See then that ye LIVE circumspectly,
not as fools, but as wise,
Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
Wherefore be ye not unwise,
but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

And so our walk includes everything we are and do—the kind of people we are, the things that we do, the places we go, the friends we have, the way we talk. Nothing about us is excluded! We live the way we live because we are the kind of people that we are. It is as simple as that. That is one reason we need to see that becoming a Christian means a complete change, inwardly and outwardly.

But let me start dealing with our text by answering the question which may already be in your mind (at least I hope it is):

I. WHAT DOES "CIRCUMSPECTLY" MEAN?

This is not a word that we use very often, but it is an old word that still means what it meant when the KJV was translated.

The English word has two parts: circum, and spectly. Circum means around--as in the word, circumference. And spectly has to do with looking--as in spectator, or that old word for eye glasses: spectacles. So "circum-spectly" means looking around.

Now this does not mean looking at everything that is going on around you. Do you remember walking with your parents, and suddenly falling down because you tripped over something, or stepped into a hole? What did your parent say? He or she said, "You need to look where you are going!"

So it is in the Christian life; we need to pay attention to the way we are walking, the way we are living. We are not to be careless and thoughtless. We are to be careful. We need to know that we are living the way God wants us to live, and that we are diligently seeking to be what God wants us to be, and to do what God wants us to do. And all of this is laid out in the Word of God.

So walking circumspectly is not any different from walking in the light; it just emphasizes that we need to exercise the greatest care every day to make sure that we are really walking in the light! The person who is careless about his life is not walking circumspectly.

The Greek word can mean correctly, or accurately. And Paul was not saying, "See how you should walk," but "See that ye walk . . ." Paul was not asking them to judge each other, but for every child of God to be continually examining, and correcting (if necessary), his own character and life.

This is a life-long task for every one of us. The goal should be the greatest conformity possible to the will of God as it is revealed in the Word of God.

Start with Ephesians. Let this Epistle be descriptive of the kind of a person you are, and the way you live. Then you will be walking "circumspectly."

But then Paul elaborated on what he meant.

II. TWO POSSIBILITIES.

He expressed this in the word, "Not as fools, but as wise."

This was a play on words with Paul. It is the only time in the NT that this word for "fools" is used. It lit. means unwise. So he was saying, "Not as unwise, but as wise."

Paul was not talking about intelligence here, but about wisdom. Intelligence is the ability to learn; wisdom is the ability to use in the right way that which we have learned. So a foolish Christian in this sense is a Christian who is not living the way he knows he ought to live. He may not know all that he ought to know, but he knows better than to live the way he is living.

Is this not true to some extent with all of us? Very few of us, if any, live the way we know we ought to live. SO THIS IS AN APPEAL BY PAUL FOR BELIEVERS TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE LIGHT THAT THEY HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE WORD. This is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Philippian church and said,

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect,
be thus minded:
and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded,
God shall reveal even this unto you.
Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained,
let us walk by the same rule,
let us mind the same thing (Phil. 3:15, 16).

In many, many instances our problem is not that we do not know what to do, but that we are not doing what we know we should do.

Then Paul spoke of:

III. THE URGENCY PLACED UPON US.

This urgency is twofold, and both are mentioned in verse 16: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

One has to do with time; the other has to do with the nature of the days in which we live.

As you all know, this Epistle was written almost 2,000 years ago, but it is just as up-to-date as any writing possibly could be. We are still involved with time, and the days in which we live are still "evil."

A. Time.

We all have the same amount of time each day: 24 hours! We use it, or we lose it. It can never be brought back. Opportunities that we have now, we may never have again. Time moves on constantly. One thing which we cannot stop is time.

None of us knows how much time we have to live for the Lord here on earth. We do not know how much longer we will be able to serve the Lord. We do not know if the opportunities that are before us now will still be before us tomorrow, or even this afternoon. Perhaps you have heard the Latin words, Tempus fugit --Time flies.

What did Paul say here that we are to do about TIME?

He said that we are to redeem it! What did he mean by that?

Many have suggested that the word for "time" which Paul used here speaks of the opportunities that come to us each day. To "redeem" these opportunities means to make use of them (according to the context), not primarily for ourselves, nor even for others, but for the Lord!

This does not mean that we are to spend every waking moment speaking to others about the Lord, but it does mean that we are to live our lives continuously walking circumspectly, doing that which pleases the Lord. By the grace of God, and through the Spirit of God, we are to seek to be and do all that the Lord wants us to be and do.

That is the first reason for the urgency that is placed

upon us. The second is this:

- B. The evil days in which we live: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

It was true then, it is true now: we are living in days that are morally evil, and their influence upon every person alive is evil, whether a person be a Christian or not. Things are so bad now that many non-Christians are alarmed. Our leaders are facing problems of evil for which they often say there is no solution. Think of the crimes, the drugs, the immorality, the dishonesty, the wars, the hatred, the greed. Thank God there are many blessings that we enjoy every day, but over all of us there is a heavy, black, dark, and ever-darkening cloud of terrible evil. These are terribly evil days, and they continue to get worse all of the time.

What are we to do about it?

Paul said then, and the Word of God still stands, that the very evils of our day are a great and constant call for those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ to "walk circumspectly." This is not a day to throw restraints away, and to do what the world is doing. The darker the days, the brighter the light of the Gospel will shine. And where does it need to be shining? In your life, and in mine. These are days in which we need to be more concerned about holiness of life than ever before. The world may not be concerned about God, but we certainly need to be. Holiness is not popular with the world, but it brings the blessing of the Lord. We have great opportunities before us. Let us pray that the Lord will enable us to make full use of them, to please Him, and to bring glory to His Name.

So where does all of this bring us? What conclusion did Paul draw at this point?

IV. OUR NEED.

It is clearly stated in verse 17: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

Let me emphasize it this way: All of us who are here today are looking at the same verses, and hearing the same things said about these verses. But we are not all going to leave here with the same amount of truth in our hearts. Some of you are going to be moved by what our text tells us, and you are going to be doing something

about it in your own lives. Some of you may not remember what is said until you get to the door. As far as any personal profit from this service today, you might just as well have been some other place. You have not been listening with your mind and your heart.

Now I hope all of you will listen to what I have to say about this 17th verse.

Paul was saying that we should not be "unwise" (not the same word as in verse 15). By this he meant that we are not to be a people who hear but do not put our minds into gear. Instead, we are to understand "what the will of the Lord is."

Where do we find the will of God? I have said it many times before, and I say it again: The will of God is revealed for us in the Word of God, in our Bibles! So, if we are to understand what God's will is, this means we need to be reading our Bibles, we need to be attending church services where the Bible is taught, we need to be getting all of the help that we can, with the purpose of not only knowing the truths of Scripture, but of understanding how we are to live our lives according to the will and Word of God!

It is absolutely impossible for us to walk in the light, or to walk circumspectly in this world where there are so many pitfalls and detours, if we do not know what the light is! Do not follow the teaching of any person unless you can see that his teaching comes right out of this book.

Concl: The Church of the twentieth century is guilty of two great sins. And, from this Epistle, I would say that the Church of the first century was guilty of the same two great sins. They are:

- 1) We do not know the truth of the Word of God as we should, and as we need to know it.
 - 2) We do not live by the truth that we do know.
- If we can correct these, we will correct all of the other things that are wrong with the Church.

These are evil days in which we live—evil beyond description. But what a tragedy that in these same evil days we have a spiritually sick Church. I am speaking about the whole body of Christ. I heard just this week that plenty is going on in our churches, possibly more than ever before, but less is being accomplished. Why? Because we, the Lord's people, are not walking circumspectly in the light of God's Word. Let us pray that things will change in our lives, and then the world will feel the impact of the Gospel of Christ.

"BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT"

Part I

Ephesians 5:18-21

Intro: We come to a subject today which is of vital importance to everyone who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. And it has to do with the Holy Spirit.

A couple of weeks ago I received a letter from a gentleman who listens to our Sunday broadcast, and he took me to task for my teaching about the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was his belief that the term Deity does not belong to Christ, and I am sure that he would say that it does not belong to the Holy Spirit either. Well, at the risk of getting another letter, let me say I believe, and we here at Trinity Bible Church believe, in the Deity of God, the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also in the Deity of the Holy Spirit. I will go farther than that and say that we believe here at Trinity in the equal Deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe that all Three are eternal, all Three are worthy of our worship, and that all Three have been, and still are, active in our salvation.

We have named our church the Trinity Bible Church in order to communicate that we believe in the Trinity, we believe in the Bible—that it is the Word of God, and we believe that the Church was established by God for His own glory, for the edification of His people, and for a testimony to the world. We want everyone to know where we stand, and we are very thankful to be able to declare these truths when so many are either questioning them, or have turned from them altogether.

And so when we come today to speak of the filling of the Holy Spirit, we believe that Paul was teaching that it was the will of God for every child of God to be filled with this third Member of the Godhead. We do not speak of God the Father as the first Member, and of Christ as the second Member, and of the Holy Spirit as the third Member, to say that there are three grades of Deity in the Godhead. It is only as a matter of convenience when we distinguish between them.

This is not the first time the Apostle Paul has mentioned the Holy Spirit. In fact, it is the tenth reference to the Holy Spirit. And there are two more to follow this. Let me review them for you. Cf. 1:13, 17;

2:18, 22;

3:5, 16;

4:3, 4, 30.

Remember that 5:9 probably should read, the fruit of the light, and not "the fruit of the Spirit." So we will pass by that reference. But the last references are:

5:18 (our text);

6:17, 18.

So there are twelve in all, and all of them are very important statements for us to understand.

Paul has taught us in this Ephesian Epistle that there is only one Holy Spirit. These passages teach us about the Holy Spirit's relationship to the Word of God. They speak of His work in our salvation. They speak of His part and the help that He gives us in our conflict with the Devil. They tell of His ministry in the Church. And they tell of the personal relationship that we have with the Holy Spirit day by day. We are not to grieve Him. We are to be filled by Him.

So the doctrine of the Holy Spirit constitutes a major part of this Epistle. To understand this Pauline letter is to have learned a great deal about the Holy Spirit. And I hope that we are all paying special attention to this emphasis that Paul has made here in Ephesians.

But now we want to leave those other passages for the time being and concentrate on what we have here in these four verses: 18 through 21. (Read.) And I am going to spend more than one Sunday on them because of their great importance to you and to me as the children of God.

Now let me say about this text what I have said repeatedly about Paul's writing in this Epistle, namely: This is not an isolated passage, but it is a continuation of what he had been writing about, and it leads into what Paul was about to say about marriage, family life, and our work. And this, in turn, prepared the way for what he was going to say about the warfare in which all of us are engaged every day: our conflict with Satan and the forces of evil. So these four verses occupy a very important place in this Epistle.

Note, then, that verse 18 begins with the word, "And."

This means (in the light of what we have in verses 15 through 17) that, if we are to "walk circumspectly," we must "be filled with the Spirit." Paul was not speaking here of a truth that applies just to preachers, or elders, or deacons, or missionaries, or any other leaders in the Lord's work. It certainly applies to them, but it applies to all believers. It applies to me, but it also applies to you--from the oldest to the the youngest. It applies to every true Christian. We all need to be, we all must be, filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now the first thing that I want you to notice about verse 18 is:

I. A STRANGE COMPARISON.

Paul compared and contrasted a Spirit-filled Christian with an intoxicated person. Why would he do this?

Let me suggest two reasons:

A. A contrast with the past.

We have noticed that from Eph. 4:17 on right up to this eighteenth verse of chapter 5 Paul had been saying that, as the people of God they could not go on living the way they lived before they came to Christ. (Note the passages.)

Drunkenness was one of the chief problems that people faced in the city of Ephesus. It certainly is one of the greatest problems we have in our society today. It probably affects more lives, and leads to more sins of other kinds, than any other sinful problem that we have today. And it has always been that way. Drinking has ruined many a person's health. Drinking has ruined people's morals. Drinking has caused many marriages to be destroyed. Drinking has ruined many a promising profession. Great world leaders have been ruined by drinking. And yet millions are still being spent today to get people to drink. Even in the most primitive societies they have their intoxicating beverages. When you stop to think how universal this problem is, you can see that life without God and without Christ can be described as life under the dominion and control of drink.

The Ephesians knew what Paul was talking about, and we ought to know what he was talking about, too.

Just a few days ago I heard of a preacher who was causing real problems in his church because he refused to take a teetotaler's stand against drinking intoxicating drinks. He refused to practise total abstinence. I know of other preachers who take that same stand. They seem to be so wise, but they are playing with fire! Let us beware. The greater the problem becomes in our society, the greater the danger it is for everyone.

Study the subject of drunkenness in Scripture, and it will give you plenty to think about.

I repeat: Life in the world can be described as a life that is controlled by drink.

Paul said that that cannot be permitted to continue. Paul said that therein is "excess."

"Excess" is a very interesting, a very revealing word in the original Greek. It literally means THAT FROM WHICH YOU CANNOT BE SAVED. It describes the bondage that a person is under who is ensnared with drinking. This is the word that the Lord used of the prodigal son when he spoke of his "riotous living." Cf. Luke 15:13. Paul used this word when he was saying that an elder cannot have children who are "accused of riot." And Peter wrote these words when he was speaking about how believers should live in contrast with the way the used to live:

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh,
arm yourselves likewise with the same mind:
for he that hath suffered in the flesh
hath ceased from sin;
That he no longer should live
the rest of his time in the flesh
to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.
For the time past of our life may suffice us
to have wrought the will of the Gentiles,
when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts,
excess of wine, revellings, banquetings,
and abominable idolatries:
Wherein they think it strange
that ye run not with them
to the same excess of riot,
speaking evil of you (1 Pet. 4:1-4).

The more a person is given to drink, the more he becomes unsavable. He becomes more and more enslaved to his habit, unable to deliver himself, neither can others deliver him. Only the Lord can deliver him. But drink makes the drinker harder than ever to reach with the Gospel of salvation. Such a person, according to the word "excess," is a waster. He wastes his time, his money, his faculties, and ultimately, HIMSELF! Such is the life and destiny of the man who is controlled by drink. He reaps the harvest of others sins, and eventually, apart from the grace of God, will find himself in hell.

Let me say today that if this is your problem, if this is your life, there is only one remedy. Christ is the only One Who can save you, not only from that sin, but from all other sins. He will deliver you not only from its power, but from the penalty that will finally await you if you do not flee to Christ for mercy and forgiveness.

Now this helps us to understand why Paul made this contrast.

B. The new life: "But be filled with the Spirit."

Do you remember that the people in Jerusalem thought that the early Christians on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 thought that they were drunk, when in reality there were "filled with the Spirit"? Cf. Acts 2:13. And then we have Peter's denial in verses 14 and 15.

To be filled with intoxicating drink is to be controlled by that drink; to be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit. In the first case, the drunkard becomes a fool; in the second, under the control of the Spirit, the believer is made wise and powerful to the glory of God. The first leads downward; the second leads upward. The first destroys; the second raises to the greatest heights of life and blessing.

To be filled with the Spirit is to be filled up, to be abundantly supplied with the Holy Spirit Himself. It is to be directed by the Holy Spirit in all that we are and say and do. Obviously this is a growing relationship. We are to be filled, and to keep on being filled, in a greater and greater measure. When we were unsaved, we were controlled by our lusts. Now that we are saved, we are to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

This brings us to the all-important question:

II. HOW ARE WE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

This is not some kind of a second blessing. This is not the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Read 1 Cor. 12:13 and you will find out what the baptism of the Holy Spirit is. This is more than the indwelling of the Spirit. He Who indwells us is to fill us!

I do not know of any passage of Scripture that tells us how we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and so I am leery of all of those teachers who have a 1, 2, and 3-point formula for being filled with the Spirit.

The filling of the Spirit is a divine enabling that comes to us, where we are strengthened to do the will of God, as Paul prayed in his prayer in Eph. 3:16. When the early disciples were warned not to preach or teach any more in the Name of the Lord, they prayed for boldness, and Acts 4:31 tells us that

. . . they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,
and they spake the word of God with boldness.
We will understand more about what it means to be filled

with the Holy Spirit when, having come this far in this Epistle to the Ephesians, we realize that we cannot do all that the Lord wants us to do unless we have help. And that help is here being promised to us as we trust in the Holy Spirit.

But how specifically does it come?

Most of you have heard that one way we learn the meaning of Scripture is by comparing Scripture with Scripture. And I think that most of you know also that there is a great deal of similarity between the Epistles of Paul to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. That is why our Scripture reading was taken today from Colossians 3.

Now this is my question: WHAT CORRESPONDS IN COLOSSIANS 3 TO WHAT WE HAVE BEFORE US TODAY IN EPHESIANS 5?

Paul did not tell them to "be filled with the Spirit," but what did he tell them? Look at Col. 3:16.

The filling of the Spirit is a sovereign act of the Holy Spirit. How the Spirit will work in our lives, only He knows. But there is a condition, and I think that you will find this condition to be present in the lives of those who in Scripture were filled with the Spirit. It was this: **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, . . ."** "The word of Christ" is certainly the Word of God, but I think that Paul was making a special point here when he called it, "the word of Christ."

Please turn to John 16:12-15 as we close. (Read.) The Holy Spirit teaches us what the Lord Jesus wants us to know, i.e., "the word of Christ." As we listen, as we seek to understand it, as we believe it, and obey it, the Holy Spirit will be taking more and more control of our lives. This is what it means to "be filled with the Spirit." No Christian can be filled with the Spirit who ignores or disobeys the Word of God. It is when we listen to the Spirit, receive what He shows us, and, by the grace of God, seek His power to do what the Lord wants us to do, that we will experience the blessing of having our lives controlled by the Spirit of God.

Concl: The true Christian life is a life under the control of the Spirit. He indwells us; He desires to fill us. And the Lord's word to us is where we need to start, and then faithfully seek to do the Lord's will as the Word of God becomes clearer and clearer to us. The Holy Spirit is a Person. And He deals with us personally as individual believers as He sees our need, and as He desires to teach us. Let us pray that we will be attentive and faithful to Him.

"PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS"

Ephesians 5:19

Intro: In the Book of Colossians we have a verse which closely parallels Ephesians 5:19. It is Colossians 3:16, which reads like this:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

What are we dealing with in these verses? (Read Eph. 5:19.)

I think that the answer is very simple IF we are paying close attention to the context in each case.

Last Sunday I sought to bring out the truth, by comparing these two verses with each other that to be filled with the Holy Spirit we must have the word of Christ dwelling richly in our hearts. And conversely, if we have the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, we will, without any doubt, be filled with the Spirit.

If we follow on from this, we can see that the first result of being filled with the Spirit is that we will be speaking to ourselves "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs . . ."

And, in the two verses which follow verse 19, we have two other results of being filled with the Spirit, and, the Lord willing, we will get to them in the following Sundays. Verse 20 has to do, as you can see, with thanksgiving, and verse 21 has to do with submission. These three are the first evidences that a child of God is filled, controlled, by and with the Holy Spirit.

This is not what we usually think about when we consider the filling of the Spirit. We think of a powerful preacher, or one who is instrumental in leading others to Christ. But Paul was telling the Ephesian church in this passage what to look for in themselves, or in anyone else, to identify a Spirit-filled Christian.

So let us think of this as:

I. THE FIRST MARK OF A SPIRIT-FILLED CHRISTIAN.

Paul identified it with three words:

- 1) "Speaking."
- 2) "Singing."
- 3) "Making melody in your hearts."

Obviously all of it has to do with singing. People

usually sing because they are happy. That is why a Spirit-filled Christian sings: HE IS HAPPY! Let me remind you that "the fruit of the Spirit is ... joy ..." And so, as the words of the hymn go, "I sing because I'm happy ..." The Word of God produces joy; the Holy Spirit produces joy. The Christian life is a happy life, the happiest life a person can live. Paul told the Philippians,

Rejoice in the Lord always;
and again I say, Rejoice (Phil. 4:4).

Earlier Paul had written to the Thessalonian church, "Rejoice evermore" (1 Thess. 5:16). David, in OT times wrote at the beginning of Psalm 34,

I will bless the Lord at all times:
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Nowhere does the Bible promise us an easy time. In fact the Bible says that the more we love the Lord and the more want to please the Lord, the greater our troubles may be. I am referring to Paul's words in 2 Tim. 3:12 where he said,

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

But even though we may be persecuted and suffer in other ways, the Lord intends for us always to be happy. It is sin that makes us unhappy; holiness makes us happy. So to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be a happy, singing Christian.

But notice that Paul said that this singing will be "making melody in your hearts." Why did Paul add this?

He must have done it to show that it is a joy that comes from our hearts. It is a real joy, a sincere joy. It is genuine--not something that is merely outward, not something that we do because others are doing it. But it is a joy which must be expressed because it does come from our hearts.

Many years ago I heard a preacher say that there is more lying, more dishonesty, going on behind the hymn book than in any other place. So often we sing words which we do not even pay any attention to. But when the Holy Spirit is controlling and blessing our lives, our singing will come from our hearts. Words take on a new meaning. We begin to notice what we are singing, and the words, although written by someone else, become our words. Have you had that happen in your life? The words may not sound like much when they come out. Maybe we have trouble carrying a tune. But whatever our singing ability may or may not be, if it comes from our heart, it brings delight to the heart of God!

But why did Paul also call it, "speaking"?

Paul used a Greek word here which emphasizes the fact that our joy does not stay bottled up within us, but it is expressed in words. We are to get it out! Whatever our language may be, we are to use words to express our joy. Usually when we are happy, it will be impossible to keep us quiet, but Paul evidently felt that it was necessary to make this a part of the exhortation.

In Col. 3:16 Paul used two other words: "teaching and admonishing."

This adds the idea that we do not just use any words when we sing, but we are to use words that teach, and words that exhort and warn. We do not sing just because we like a particular tune, nor do we sing just to have fun, but we sing because we have a message to convey, a message of truth, a message of practical importance. Singing is to be a ministry. It is to be a close companion of the preaching of the Word. No other kind of singing is justified for the people of God or in the Church.

But let us go on.

II. WHAT ARE WE TO SING?

Paul said, "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." What did he mean by these?

- Cf. Jas. 5:13.
- A. "Psalms": the Book of the Psalms in the OT, and the word suggests that it be accompanied by a musical instrument.
 - B. "Hymns": the chief idea here is that of praise to God!
 - C. "Spiritual songs": songs which have the character of having been produced by the Spirit. Since the Spirit has given us the Word of God, "spiritual songs" are songs which are in complete agreement with the Word of God.

This term, "spiritual songs," would indicate that the music of the church is distinctively different from the music of the world. It is to be "spiritual," not "carnal"--and this would apply to the music as well as to the words. When people here Christian music, there should be no question as to what it is.

Bishop Lightfoot, a well-known Greek scholar of the

Church of England who lived in the last century, and who was a devout Christian, defined these words as I have defined them for you, and then he went on to say that Paul was not necessarily speaking of three kinds of music, but three characteristics which describe all music that is truly Christian. Music to be acceptable to God must either be taken directly from the Psalms, or in accord with any other part of Scripture, and its message must be directed toward God, worshipping Him, exalting Him, praising Him.

So much of our music today is man-centered, not God-centered. Paul was saying that the Holy Spirit gives a joy which is expressed in words drawn from Scripture and designed to glorify God.

Today much of our music in the church is designed to attract people, not to glorify God. The natural man, the man without Christ, should not be attracted by our music any more than he is attracted by the Word of God because our music is to be taken from the Word of God and designed to glorify God, neither of which the unsaved person is interested in. But the non-Christian needs to hear from our music as well as from our messages that there is something distinctly different, and infinitely superior, about the message the church is communicating to the world.

But let me take up a third point. It is this:

III. WHO SHOULD SING?

I doubt if any of the Ephesian Christians would know what you were talking about if you mentioned special music for the church service. In fact, they probably knew nothing about choirs. This is not to say that special music and choirs are wrong, but extreme care needs to be taken to keep it from being a performance.

Paul indicated here that everyone should be involved in the ministry of music. We do not leave it up to other people to praise the Lord for us; we praise the Lord for ourselves. And as it is incumbent upon every Christian to be filled with the Spirit, so it is the privilege and the responsibility of every Christian to be "speaking ... in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

So, assuming that the music is right, the true ministry of music is the ministry of all of the congregation, not of just a few of the better singers.

So many of the extras that we have in our churches today

are of fairly recent origin, and were not known or emphasized much more than a hundred years ago—and some of them less than that.

So who sings? We all do.

Now my last point:

IV. TO WHOM DO WE SING?

What does our text say? Notice: "Speaking to yourselves ... singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.

Our singing is to go to each other, and it also is to go to the Lord. Will you notice that there is nothing said here about singing to the unsaved, to draw them in, or to attract them to the service. They may be impressed with the message of our singing, and may even be reached through the message of song, but the songs are not planned for them. We are to sing to each other, to teach each other, to exhort each other, to praise the Lord with each other. And all of our singing is to be designed for the glorification of the Lord. He must be pleased with it. It must be acceptable to Him.

Why did Paul say "singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord"? Some say that it was because the singing was to be accompanied by some musical instrument. Musical instruments were approved by the word "psalms." But the "making melody" could hardly be a musical instrument because it is said to be "in your hearts." A better explanation seems to be that the mouth and lips are used for singing, and they to be accompanied ("making melody") by the heart in singing to the Lord.

Concl: What a difference it would make in our churches if our singing were according to God's plan! Music is never to be for entertainment. Music is a ministry—to each other, and to the Lord. Music is the companion of the ministry of the Word.

And so Paul has made it very clear that when the Word of Christ is dwelling in us, when we love and understand the Word of God, it is going to affect our music. We cannot be going God's way with the Word, and the world's way with our music. What we do with the one will determine what we will do with the other. And the more we seek to exalt God in our preaching and in our singing, the greater is the evidence of the Spirit's control and blessing upon the ministry of our church. May we always set the Lord before us in our preaching and in our singing that we may be assured of the blessing of the Holy Spirit in our lives and fellowship!

THANKSGIVING
Ephesians 5:20

Intro: We have been thinking together for the last two Sundays about a Spirit-filled Christian.

We have learned that to be Spirit-filled we must be filled with the Word of God. Cf. Col. 3:16. This means not only that we seek a greater and greater understanding of the Word, but it means that we are seeking, by the grace of God, to obey the Word of God. To be filled with the Spirit of God is to be controlled by the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God controls us with the Word of God. To claim to be filled with the Spirit, and yet be disobeying the Word of God, is a great contradiction. *To be filled w/the Spirit is to be empowered by the Spirit.*

Last week we learned that the first evidence that we are Spirit-filled (at least the first evidence that Paul mentioned here) is that our interest in music will undergo a significant change. We are interested in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." We will look upon music, not as entertainment, but as a ministry--a ministry to God, and a ministry to each other. See Eph. 5:19.

Today we want to take up a second evidence of being Spirit-filled: thanksgiving. (Read Eph. 5:20.)

First, let us consider:

I. THE MEANING OF THE WORD: THANKSGIVING.

I doubt if many of us have even taken the time to look up this word in a dictionary. We all assume that we know what it means, and probably our idea of its meaning is right, or close to being right.

To give thanks is to express gratitude. Thanksgiving is gratitude. It is when we express appreciation for blessings received. Somebody does something for us, and we show that we recognize that he (or she) has done. We acknowledge what has been done, and express that we delight in it.

So thanksgiving usually requires words, but it must be the sincere attitude of a person's heart. If it is not sincere, it is hypocrisy, and is really despicable.

So, when we are thankful, we are showing that we recognize a blessing, that we are grateful for it, and that we want to reward with words of thanksgiving the person who has done something for us. This is what it means to be thankful.

But so far I have been speaking about just about the word, "thanks." But Paul said, "Giving thanks ... " What does the "giving" suggest?

I realize that I am being very simple this morning, but I want you to notice the details of this verse, details which perhaps you have overlooked before. So think with me for a moment about the significance of the word, "giving."

In a moment I want to answer the question, To whom do we give thanks? That, too, is very clear in our text. But let me borrow from the answer to that question just now. We, of course, give our thanks to God! We are bringing a gift to Him. The verse suggests that it is given voluntarily, willingly. We are not to give to God reluctantly. We want to give joyfully. But what shall we give Him?

Let us look back into the OT for just a moment.

It was easy for the people of God in the OT to feel that they were doing something for God when they brought their sacrifices to Him. But He said to them in Psa. 50:12,

If I were hungry, I would not tell thee:
for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

And just before this in Psa. 50:10 he had said,

For every beast of the forest is mine,
and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

God did not ask for their sacrifices because He was hungry. We bring Him gifts of money to be used in His work, but He is not poor! We give Him our service, but He is not dependent upon us!

What does He want? Psa. 50:14a says, "Offer unto God thanksgiving ... "

God wants us to recognize that He is the One Who gives us the blessings we have, all of them, and He wants us to be grateful to Him. Nothing delights Him more than our praise when it is offered from the heart. Psa. 136:1 tells us this:

O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good:
for his mercy endureth forever.

Over and over again in the OT and in the NT we find this same theme. In our Scripture reading a few moments ago we had those words:

By him (Christ) therefore let us offer
the sacrifice of praise to God continually,
that is, the fruit of our lips
giving thanks to his name (Heb. 13:15).

To praise Him is to give thanks to Him, and to give

thanks to Him is to praise Him.

God does not take our thanksgiving from us. We give it to Him. To be sure, He makes us thankful, and moves our hearts to give, but we give, give it heartily, give it with true gratitude in our hearts to Him. This is what the Holy Spirit does when we are filled with the Spirit Himself.

But let us go on to consider:

II. TO WHOM DO WE GIVE THANKS?

Well, we give thanks to anyone who does something for us. Or we should. I hope you are not negligent in doing that, even when a person opens a door for you. But we are talking about something that is infinitely more important than any thanksgiving that we can give to each other. We are talking about "giving thanks unto God and the Father."

What about this? Is there a difference between God and the Father? Absolutely not! He is our Father, our heavenly Father. We could translate those words like this: "Giving thanks unto God, even the Father ... " Paul was emphasizing that we need to recognize that God is our heavenly Father when we come to give Him thanks. We are His children by faith in Christ. He loves us. He makes it His business to take care of us, to meet our needs, to protect us, to work all things in life together for us so that the outcome is good. God is worthy of many great and majestic titles, but nothing Him pleases Him any more than for us to come to Him and say, "Father." How are we to pray? We are to say, "Our Father ... "

Every blessing we have ever had, and every blessing we ever will have, has come ultimately from our heavenly Father! This applies to ALL of them! And we need to give Him thanks.

This means coming to Him in prayer—not just at the table (although we should not neglect praying before our meals), but for all of our blessings.

And this leads me to my third point:

III. WHEN DO WE GIVE THANKS?

Paul has answered this question for us twice in this verse. He has answered it in the verb, "giving thanks," because these two words are the translation of a single

verb in the original language. And He has answered it in the word, "alway," or, as we would say today, always. "Giving thanks" in the present tense means continually giving thanks. And that is the idea in "alway," or always, isn't it? When a person is filled with the Spirit, he becomes a thankful person. He is continually offering his thanks, his praise, to God.

So, when do we giving thanks to God? All of the time. It is to be a way of life to us. We thank Him in the morning for caring for us through the night, and for blessing us with a new day. We seek His blessings upon our lives, and the lives of our loved ones throughout the day. We do not wait until the day is over to praise Him, but as the blessings come, we praise Him. What a difference it would make in all of our lives if we really gave thanks to God, our heavenly Father, as we should! Above everything else we need to be thankful for God's love, and for our Saviour, for the Holy Spirit, for the Word of God, for each other.

If we start doing this, we will soon be talking like King David in the OT who said,

Many, O Lord my God,
are thy wonderful works which thou hast done,
and thy thoughts which are to us-ward:
they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:
if I would declare and speak of them,
they are more than can be numbered.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 5:18,

In every thing give thanks:
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus
concerning you.

I have partially answered the next question I want to ask, but let me ask it anyway.

IV. FOR WHAT DO WE GIVE THANKS?

It goes without saying that, if we are giving thanks always that it would be "for all things"!

This is what 1 Thess. 5:18 teaches us, the verse I referred to a moment ago: "In every thing give thanks ... "

Now our lives are filled with three kinds of things:

- 1) Things we like.
- 2) Things we do not like.
- 3) Things that we can do with, or do without.

It is fairly easy to thank the Lord for the things we

like, i.e., when things are going well with us. The so-so things may be a little more difficult because it is easy to overlook them. But the difficult things are those things which we would classify as bad: a humiliating experience, a failure of some kind, ill health, a financial loss, perhaps the death of a loved one, the ordinary frustrations of daily life, a broken relationship with some friend—things like these and many others that we can all think about. What about Paul and Silas in that Philippians jail, at midnight, their bodies swollen and in pain because of the beating they had received? But Acts 16:25 tells us that

... at midnight Paul and Silas prayed,
and sang praises unto God: ...

Do we glory in our infirmities, like Paul did? Do we really believe that God works all things together in our lives for our good and for His own glory? And what about Job after suffering the devastating losses which included the death of all ten of his children? What did he say?

... the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;
blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21b).

There is only one way that we can possibly praise God for the hard, tough, hurtful things that come into all of our lives, and that, according to our text, is for us to be FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT!

We all have much to learn about this, but let us ask the Lord to help us to praise Him always for all things. When we meet our troubles with a grateful heart, the real sting is taken out of them.

One more question before I close.

V. HOW DO WE GIVE THANKS?

I am not speaking of the words you use, but I have in mind Paul's words when he said that our praise must be given "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

How do we give thanks? We give thanks "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." What did Paul mean?

To do anything "in" any person's name is to do it with the authority of that person. And for the Apostle Paul to have used the full name and title of our Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, means that we offer our praise with the full authority of our Lord Jesus Christ!

What does this tell us?

You would think that anyone could come to God to give Him

thanks, to offer praises to Him. BUT THAT IS NOT THE CASE! Man is so defiled by sin in himself that not even his praises make him acceptable to God. Solomon wrote in Prov. 15:8,

The sacrifice of the wicked is
an abomination to the Lord:
but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

It is only by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ that any of us can come to God in prayer, expecting to be heard. He gives us our authority to come. We do not come in our names; we come in His Name. And, of course, no one can come in His Name who does not know His saving grace. Therefore, only those who know Christ as Savior, and who have God as their Father, can come to Him even with their praises.

It was in our Lord's Name that miracles were performed. Cf. Acts 3:6. It is in the Lord's Name that we are saved. Cf. Acts 4:12. Paul said in Col. 4:17,
And whatsoever ye do in word or deed,
do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God and the Father by him.
And our Lord Himself said with reference to prayer,
And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name,
that will I do,
that the Father may be glorified in the Son
(John 14:13).

Obviously we cannot ask anything in His Name which He does not approve. Asking in His Name is the same as the Lord Himself asking. So it is with our praises. We praise God for the things that Jesus Christ would praise Him for. Thus in coming to God even to praise Him we must be concerned with the will of God, and with the glory of God.

Concl: When Spurgeon on Sunday morning, February 2, 1873, was concluding his sermon on this text, he mentioned four choice benefits we will receive when we obey this verse:

- 1) We will have the satisfaction that we are honoring the Lord.
- 2) It will keep us from sin.
- 3) It will calm us when we are glad, and will cheer us when we are sad.
- 4) It will make us more useful in our ministry to others.

Cf. Vol. 19, pp. 70-72.

Let us seek the blessing of the Holy Spirit regarding our thanksgiving that we may glorify God as we should, and that we may profit from the further blessing of God upon our lives.

SUBMISSION
Ephesians 5:21-24

Intro: Submission is not a popular word today. Probably it never has been very popular. It is a word which to many people suggests the loss of personal freedom. Children do not like to be submissive to their parents. Wives do not like to be submissive to their husbands. Citizens do not like to be submissive to their government. Employees do not like to be submissive to their employers. People will often do almost anything to get a job, and then once they are employed, they want to run the organization. Students do not like to be submissive to their teachers. Men do not like to be submissive to the Lord. In our personal relationships with one another, submission is not a primary consideration. We are definitely living in a day when we do not want someone else to be telling us what to do.

And yet all of this is clearly taught in the Word of God.

This is probably one of the most important words in all of Scripture for the child of God: submission.

Do you remember the incident in Scripture when the mother of James and John went to the Lord and asked him if her two sons could sit on his right hand and on his left hand in His Kingdom? When the other ten disciples heard about it, Matthew recorded that "they were moved with indignation" (Matt. 20:24). Each of them probably felt that he deserved that place of honor. But then the Lord told all of them:

Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

And then the Lord concluded by saying,
Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:25-28).

So the Lord pointed to Himself as a pattern of submission. Did He not say,

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me (John 6:38)?

Submission calls for humility, for meekness. Lit. the Greek word means, to place under. It means that we put ourselves under the authority of others. We comply with the wishes of others. We yield to others. We are not characterized as people who have to have their own way.

The word is not only found in verses 21 and 22 of our text, but also in Eph. 1:22 where it is said that God "hath put all things under his feet," i.e., our Lord's feet—an expression of His absolute sovereignty.

With the Apostle Peter it was a particularly important word:

- 1) He used it for all of us as citizens in 1 Pet. 2:13.
- 2) For servants in 1 Pet. 2:18.
- 3) For wives in 1 Pet. 3:1, and of "the holy women" of the OT, and particularly for Sarah in 3:5.
- 4) Of "angels and authorities and powers" in heaven who are subject to the Lord. Cf. 1 Pet. 3:22.
- 5) Of the need for the younger to be subject to the older in 1 Pet. 5:5, where we read:

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves
unto the elder.
Yea, all of you be subject (a diff. word)
one to another, and be clothed with humility:
for God resisteth the proud,
and giveth grace to humble.

In Luke 2:51 it is stated that our Lord went back to Nazareth with his parents "and was subject unto them."

The writer of Hebrews said in Heb. 12:9 that even in times when we are being chastened by the Lord, we need to be in subjection to Him. And James said, "Submit yourselves ... to God" (Jas. 4:7a), and that this must come before any attempt to resist the Devil.

Elders are to have their children in subjection according to 1 Tim. 3:4. And Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthian church said that the people were to submit themselves to their spiritual leaders, and to everyone else who was laboring with Paul himself. And in 2 Cor. 9:13 Paul commended them for their subjection, their obedience, to the Gospel of Christ.

So this is a big subject, and one which we cannot neglect if we are to prosper spiritually with the blessing of the Lord upon us.

But now let us go to our text where Paul, first of all, was teaching,

I. MUTUAL SUBMISSION (Eph. 5:21a).

Now let me remind you that we are learning about the evidences that a person is filled with the Spirit. In verse 19 we learned that there would be evidence not only in what he sings, but why he sings. In verse 20 we learned that his life would be characterized by continual

thanksgiving to God for all things. Now we see that the third evidence is spirit of submission--humility, meekness, adaptability, obedience. And the verb in the original suggests that this is to be continual, not just once in a while.

The opposite of submission is pride and rebellion. A submissive person, as we have been learning, is humble and obedient; he or she is adaptable and compliant with others.

So, being filled with the Spirit does not qualify a person to boss everybody else around. No, he or she is going to be, as James said about the person who is wise according to God's wisdom, "easy to be entreated" (Jas. 3:17m).

And so this is check-up time. How do we affect other people? Do people dread to have anything to do with us because things always have to be done our way? Or do they say about us that we are "easy to get along with"?

Submissiveness does not mean that no one is in charge. Nor does it mean that we all become weaklings, and have no convictions about anything. The Word of God does recognize leaders in government, in the home, in the church, in the work place--and leaders need to lead. But even when leaders have to make tough decision they do it with an attitude of meekness, of submissiveness, of love and tenderness with compassion.

If we were all filled with the Spirit, living like this, there would never be any church fights, or splits. But it is because there is so little submissiveness in our churches, in our homes, in our places of business, and in our government, that we have so much trouble.

But it takes the Spirit of God to make us submissive--this is what Paul was saying. Sin has made each one of us self-willed! By nature we do not want anyone else to tell us what to do. And there is still of lot of this in us even though we know the Lord.

But why should we do this? Why should we be submissive?

Well, I could say that this is the happiest way to live. And I would be telling you the truth if I said that as the main reason. Or I could tell you that this is the best way to get along with people. And that is true, too. But that is not the first reason. Paul gave us the main reason that we are to submit ourselves one to another when he added, "in the fear of God." Some versions read, "in the fear of Christ."

There really is no difference whether we say "God" or "Christ." The meaning and the end result are the same.

II. THE REASON FOR SUBMISSION (Eph. 5:21b).

Anyone who reads the Bible knows that the expression, "the fear of the Lord," is very prominent in the OT. Solomon made that very important statement in Prov. 9:10,

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:
and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.
But we also need to recognize that the fear of the Lord is used in the NT--many times! What does it mean?

As strange as it may seem, perhaps the best definitions of what "the fear of God" is is to be found in the Book of the Revelation--the last Book of the Bible. Please turn to:

- 1) Rev. 14:7.
To fear God is to glorify God, and to worship Him.
- 2) Rev. 15:4.
Again, to fear the Lord is to glorify Him.
- 3) Rev. 19:5.
Again, to fear the Lord is to praise Him, to glorify Him.

From these, and the other related passages in the Bible, we can see that no one fears the Lord who does not know Him as Savior. But there are those who know the Lord who really do not fear Him. To fear the Lord means that we are fearful of not pleasing Him. And along with that goes a fear of the consequences of not pleasing Him. But one who fears the Lord wants His whole life to be characterized by obedience to the Lord, by that which will please and glorify the Lord. A person who fears the Lord lives to praise and worship Him!

So this means that we are not to submit ourselves to each other because we are interested primarily in pleasing each other. Surely, if we are saved, we want to do that. But our chief motive in living such a life is because this is what the Lord wants us to do, this is what pleases Him, this is what will bring the greatest glory to Him.

That puts it all in a different light; that puts it all in its true light! All things must begin with God, must be done to please God, and then the blessings unnumbered will follow!

And so we can say that all three of the evidences of being filled with the Spirit have to do with God:

- 1) We worship Him--in v. 19.
- 2) We thank and praise Him--in v. 20.

- 3) We are concerned about pleasing Him--in v. 21. And the way we please Him is by being submissive in our relationship with each other. This is what it means to be "submitting" ourselves "one to another in the fear of God."

So, when you read in the Bible about fearing God, or fearing the Lord, or fearing Christ, always remember that fearing THE LORD MEANS KNOWING HIM THEN AND LIVING TO PLEASE HIM. This is one of the great evidences that we are filled with the Spirit. So we submit to each other, not because it is ever easy to do, nor because we are mainly interested in pleasing each other, BUT BECAUSE WE WANT TO PLEASE THE LORD.

If this does not strike a responsive chord in your heart, let me remind you of one thing that Paul said in Romans 3:18 about people who are without Christ. He said that "there is no fear of God before their eyes." That is, they do not think about what pleases God. They are not interested in pleasing God. They just want to please themselves. "God is not in all his thoughts" (Psa. 10:4b). So if you can turn away from this verse and be comfortable about it, it may very likely be that you do not really know the Lord. May it be true that all of us are thinking of ways in which we can be more submissive to each other. There are times when husbands need to be submissive to their wives; there are times when parents need to be submissive to their children; there are times when church leaders need to be submissive to their people. It is not just a one-way street.

Now I am not going to finish all four of these verses today, but I do want to move on just briefly into verse 22, which, in one sense, is a new section, but, in another, it is a continuation of what we have been considering.

From verse 22 of chapter 5 down through verse 9 of chapter 6 we are going to be considering the major relationships that each one of us has--from the standpoint of time. Where do we spend most of our time? In two places: at home, and at work. For you young people, this can mean school. And Paul began with Eph. 5:22 to tell us:

- 1) How a Spirit-filled wife will live.
- 2) How a Spirit-filled husband will live.
- 3) How a Spirit-filled son or daughter will live.
- 4) How a Spirit-filled father will raise his children.
- 5) How a Spirit-filled servant (worker, student) will work.
- 6) How a Spirit-filled employer will treat his employees.

I do not mean that we are exempt if we are not Spirit-filled, but I want you to see where both the power and the joy comes

from to live as Paul teaches us to live in these verses.

III. WHERE SUBMISSION BEGINS (Eph. 5:22a).

We can say two things in this connection.

- A. It begins at home.
- B. It begins with the wife.

The first people that will be able to see that we are Spirit-filled, controlled and led and empowered by the Spirit, are the members of our immediate families. If it isn't evident there, then it is non-existent. The people who know us the best, and see us as we are, are the people who should be blessed the most by our relationship with the Lord. If the Word is dwelling in me, if the Spirit of God is really ruling in my life, if I really love the Lord as much as it might appear to you, Lucille will be the first to know it! And that is just as true of your family as it is of ours.

But let me say just a word to the wives before I close, and to those who have been wives but now may be alone, and also to those of you younger ladies who some day will be wives.

The Lord has given you a very special place in the life of your husband. He has placed you in a very honored position in your home. And the Spirit of God directed Paul to speak to you first. You are to submit yourself to your husband as unto the Lord. He is to see from the way you react to Him how much you love the Lord. And remember from Genesis 2 that husbands were given wives to help them, not just in house-cleaning, and cooking, and making beds, and taking care of children. You do all of those things, and they are all a real help to your husband. But do you know where he needs the most help? He needs the most help in his walk with the Lord! And do you know where his best help is going to come from? FROM YOU! As he sees your loving submissiveness to him, even when he does not deserve it, you are going to help him learn to be submissive to the Lord in his own life.

Don't let any feminist, any woman's libber, talk you out of that! What I am saying this morning is scorned by the world, but it is very, very precious to God! He made us male and female. He has given us our roles in the family. And He blesses us when we do His will. The happiest wife in the world is the wife who knows the Lord and who lives in submission to her husband because she wants to please the Lord, and because she loves her

husband. Let me say again: Don't let any feminist take your blessing from you, even if she professes to be a Christian, and may be a Christian, even though deceived. For a Christian wife to be a feminist is to dishonor the Lord in a most serious way. And it will bring its own punishment.

Concl: Please do not begin making excuses even to yourself.

I am not dealing today with my own ideas; this is the Word of God! Whatever else you may try to do to please the Lord, you cannot succeed if you are not being submissive to your husband. And the Apostle Peter said that you need to be submissive to your husband even if he does not know the Lord. It is by your submission to him that the Holy Spirit may work in his heart for his salvation. You do not win him by preaching the truth to him, but by practicing the truth before him. You obey the Lord to please Him, and you will be surprised how the Lord will help you in your desire to do His will.

Let me give you one final incentive from Scripture for your submission to your husband and to the Lord. This, according to Phil. 2:5-11, is the way to be most like our Lord Jesus Christ. His humbling and obedience to the Father were His submission to the Father. And you and I (and this applies to all of us) are exhorted to have the mind of Christ. It is when people see Christ living in us that our lives will be the greatest blessing to them.

WIVES
Ephesians 5:22-24

Intro: We have come to that part of Ephesians where Paul addressed himself to particular groups in the church. He began with the wives, moved on to the husbands, spoke to the children, exhorted the fathers, then told the servants what to do, and finally gave a word to those who were masters. This takes up the rest of chapter 5, and the first nine verses of chapter 6.

In Ephesians 5:21 Paul brought up the subject of submission. This was applied to all who were in the church, and he mentioned it as evidence of being filled with the Spirit. In their relationship with each other, there was to be a spirit of submission among the members of the church. This mutual-submission could be described by what Paul wrote to the Philippian church in Phil. 2:2-4, especially verse 4. (Read.) In the church (or in any other group), if the people who make up church each wants to have his own way, there will be nothing but chaos! If each of us is looking out primarily for himself, we will have nothing but trouble. We are to be concerned about the interests of others. We must seek to do that which is going to be better for others than for ourselves, IF a choice is to be made. The greatest Example of submission is our Lord Jesus Christ (as Paul was saying in Phil. 2). He suffered and died on the Cross because:

- 1) He was submissive to God.
- 2) He was seeking our greatest benefit, which was, our salvation.

I repeat what I think I said last Sunday: Paul was not talking about forgetting about the Word of God. He was not even thinking about compromising with the truth of God. We are always to stand fast on the Word. But in those things which do not involve any violation of Scripture, we are to be a submissive people.

To illustrate: James and John were not being submissive when they wanted to sit on the right hand and on the left hand of our Lord in His kingdom. Perhaps in your daily Bible reading you are reading about Rehoboam, Solomon's son who succeeded him as the King of Israel. The people came to Rehoboam asking for relief from the heavy burdens they had been under with his father, King Solomon. Rehoboam took the advice of his peers, rather than the counsel of the older men, and told the people that his little finger would be thicker than his father's loins. Cf. 2 Chron. 10:10, 11. He said that he would add to their yoke, make their burden heavier. In saying what he did, he was not being submissive to his people when he could have done what they asked him to do without compromising in any way.

In the three relationships that are discussed in this section of Ephesians that we are beginning today, submission is the issue:

- 1) Wives are to be submissive to their husbands.
- 2) Children are to be submissive to their parents.
- 3) Slaves are to be submissive to their masters.

And, as I mentioned last week, in each case the one with the lesser responsibility is mentioned first. Why?

Perhaps we can see the reason if we look at society today. With the growing emphasis upon the rights of individuals, we have introduced chaos into our society. The so-called "liberation" of women has been accompanied not only with the largest divorce rate in our history, but in unmarried couples living together without being married. The failure of parents to train their children has given us more than one generation of people who rebel at being told what to do--and no one really knows what the ultimate outcome of that will be. Also even yesterday hundreds, perhaps thousands, of state workers were marching on behalf of the demands that they are making for their new contracts. When those who are to be submissive, refused to be submissive, there is really not much that those who are in charge can do to make them submissive!

And each person is individually responsible to God for his or her behavior. The Lord did not tell husbands to make their wives submissive. He did not tell the wives to make their husbands love them. And we could say similar things about parents and children, and masters and slaves (or employers and employees). The wife is told what she is to do; the husband is told what he is to do--and so on right down the line.

But what can we do in a society like ours where the kind of teaching that we find here is almost universally rejected?

We need to see that the circumstances today give us as Christians the opportunity to show to a lost and confused world that pleasing God by doing what He says brings the kind of blessings that everyone really wants to have.

We all know, I am sure, that it takes the grace of God for us to be able to obey the Lord in anything that He tells us to do. The teaching that we have before us in this section is primarily for those whose hearts have been changed through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The non-Christian can read these, and can see what they mean, but it is only through salvation, and then walking as we have been taught to walk in this Epistle, that we can ever hope to behave in our homes and in the work place the way God wants us to do. The order of Paul's teaching in this Epistle shows us that.

Let me point out another thing from what Paul said here.

Paul was indicating that the most important, the most significant, the most influential, element in all of Ephesian life and society, IS THE HOME! As the home goes, the nation goes. If the home fails, the nation fails.

We have that all turned around today. We blame our government for most, if not all, of our troubles. But, in reality, the problem is in our homes. Divorce is common, and made easy. Many a husband and wife who are living together really have nothing to do with each other. They may be married legally, but they do not really have a marriage. Children are undisciplined. And we in our homes have created problems for our government that are unsolvable—apart from the grace of God. I am not saying that government is lily-white. We all know that it is not! We have more and more evidence of that almost every week of the year. But it is upon our homes that we need to focus our attention! And our homes cannot be right until husbands and wives are right, and only husbands and wives who have had some exposure to the Bible can possibly have the right idea about what marriage should be. God made us male and female. God made Eve and brought her to Adam to establish the first home, and to start the first family. Therefore, if we ignore the Word of God, as we have been doing in our country, we are bound to have the very problems that we are reaping like a whirlwind in our day and generation. A marriage, a home, cannot be right unless it is established upon the teachings of the Word of God.

So the order of first importance is the home, our marriages, and the relationship that a husband and wife have to each other! And a close second is the relationship that a husband and wife have to their children. Communism is destined to fail (as we are seeing in all parts of the Communistic world) not only because they have ruled God out (that is its first and greatest offense), but because it puts the state ahead of the family.

All through the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians he was focusing attention on the individual believer; at this point, in Eph. 5:22, he turned his attention on the home. I trust that the Lord will open our hearts to what his word says because it is very likely that right here in our church we have some family problems where God's answer needs to be recognized, and His will done.

We have three things in these three verses that we need to understand as we begin thinking about the wife. I am beginning with you wives, not because I want to pick on you. I am beginning here because Paul did, and Paul did because

this is the way the Spirit of God led him. You wives have a very, very honored and important place, a most important place, in the life of your husband, and in the life of your children.

- I. THE EXHORTATION (v. 22).
- II. THE EXPLANATION (v. 23).
- III. THE APPLICATION (v. 24).

I. THE EXHORTATION (Eph. 5:22):

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."

Wives, your relationship with your husband is to be marked with submission. When you married him, you took his name. You put yourself under his protection. But the word says that you are to be his helper, giving him help in every way he needs it. There may be times when he needs you to tell him about things that are not right in his life. But even if he persists in doing the wrong thing, you are to submit yourself to him, looking to the Lord to make the changes in his life that he needs.

He certainly needs you to pray for him. You married him because you fell in love with him, and you were convinced that he loved you. He is, as Paul said here, your own husband--he is legitimately, exclusively, very specially, your own husband! Show him (and everyone else) how much you love him, by adapting your life to his, not by trying to make him adapt to yours. "Submit" yourself "unto your own," your very own, husband!

"As unto the Lord." Now this means at least two things:

- 1) Let your submission to your husband be an indication of your submission to the Lord. This is the biggest reason that you need to be submissive to him: because this is what the Lord wants.
- But secondly,
- 2) Submit yourself to him as you would to the Lord--willingly, joyfully, completely. You cannot be submissive to the Lord and in rebellion against your husband at the same time. Hopefully you have learned what it means to be submissive to the Lord; transfer all of that now to your husband. Nothing else in your life will really be right if you are wrong here.

But why should a wife do this? Verse 23 gives us . . .

II. THE EXPLANATION (Eph. 5:23).

Wives, you need to be submissive to your husband because he is your head. God made him your head. He is your head just as Christ is the Head of the Church. You see,

your home is to be a miniature of what the Church is. This does not mean that you go to church at home, but that your relationship to your husband is to be a picture of the Church's relationship with Christ. Christ is not only the Head of the Church, but He is also the Saviour of the Church. To say that Christ is the Head of the Church is like saying that He is the Lord of the Church. He is both Lord and Saviour. It is His will that we are concerned about, and He is the One Who continues to work with us toward the perfection of your salvation. And just as it should be our joy in the Church to please our Lord and our Saviour, so it should be a wife's greatest joy to please her husband by doing what he wants her to do. Concerning the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, we read that:

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her ...

She will do him good and not evil

all the days of her life (Prov. 31:11a, 12).

Ladies, it would be good for all of you to memorize Proverbs 31:10-31, and then ask the Lord to help you to follow that pattern. Why was that woman doing what she did? Verse 30 tells us it was because she feared the Lord.

That is the explanation; now for . . .

III. THE APPLICATION (Eph. 5:24).

Perhaps one reason we do not know more about submission in the home is because we see so little of it in the Church. Do you see from this how the life of the Church should help us in our homes--both husbands and wives and even our children?

Let me ask you a question (and now I am speaking to all of you): Do you think that people who come to Trinity Bible Church realize that we are a people who desire to be submissive to the Lord--that this has A-#1 priority with us? This is not my church, nor is it your church. This is the Lord's church. If not, let us disband this morning! IT IS THE LORD'S CHURCH. AND WE WANT TO DO HIS WILL AS A CHURCH. WE WANT THIS MINISTRY TO BE WHAT HE WANTS IT TO BE. WE WANT TO PLEASE HIM. IF PEOPLE ARE ALSO HAPPY WITH WHAT WE DO, WE ARE THANKFUL. BUT OUR MAIN PURPOSE IS NOT TO PLEASE PEOPLE; IT IS TO PLEASE THE LORD.

Now you wives make the application to your husband.

He is your head. Christ is your husband's head. God is Christ's head. Paul said all of this in 1 Cor. 11:3. This is God's order. So in being submissive to your

husband, you are being submissive to Christ, as Christ is submissive to God. This is the divine order, and we need to maintain our part of this, by the grace of God, regardless of the way the world goes.

And this applies to "every thing."

Concl: But I can hear you wives saying at this point, "But what if . . . ?"

Let me ask you a question before you ask me a question. It is this: Do you think that the wives in the Ephesian church had some questions that they wanted to ask? "What if this . . .?"

Do you notice that Paul did not discuss this any further than what he had to say in these three verses? He didn't even say this much when he wrote to the Colossian church. He only had one verse for the wives. Why did he not discuss the problems? In 1 Peter 3 Peter said that Christian wives need to be submissive to their husbands even if their husbands are not saved.

I know there are problems. And if you as a wife have a problem with your husband, I will be glad to do all that I can to help you, to advise you. BUT what Paul wanted of the believing wives in Ephesus was that they get these divine principles established in their hearts and lives. Often when you do, the problems vanish. But if they do not, then commit them to the Lord. There is no way of telling how the Lord will help you if you learn what Paul was saying here: that you seek in all things to please your husband because he is your very own husband, and you know that you cannot be pleasing to the Lord if you are displeasing to your husband.

It might even be that some of your marriages are in serious trouble. I hope that that is not the case. But if it is, then make sure that you as a wife are pleasing to the Lord. Put the Lord and your husband first in your life. And then pray and watch to see what the Lord will do.

For all of us, the lesson of this passage is that it is the Lord we want to please first. Solomon said,

When a man's ways (or a woman's ways) please the Lord,
he (the Lord) maketh even his enemies
to be at peace with him (the man) (Prov. 16:7).

Cf. 2 Chron. 17:10 for an illustration of Prov. 16:7.

As we come to the Lord's table this morning, and realizing that we are exhorted to examine ourselves as we do, what better time and place to see if we in each of our lives really are doing all we can to please the Lord.

HUSBANDS
Ephesians 5:25-33

Intro: There are three times in the NT when husbands are addressed in particular:

- 1) Here.
- 2) Colossians 3:19.
- 3) 1 Peter 3:7.

Colossians 3:19:

Husbands, love your wives,
and be not bitter against them.

1 Peter 3:7:

Likewise, ye husbands,
dwell with them according to knowledge,
giving honour unto the wife,
as unto the weaker vessel,
and as being heirs together of the grace of life;
that your prayers be not hindered.

These verses which come later in the NT contain instructions that we do not have in Ephesians, but clearly the Ephesians passage, by virtue of its length, is the foundational passage for the NT.

We do have some of our Lord's teachings on the subject of marriage, but the Lord clearly intended to use Paul and Peter to give the more detailed instructions to wives as well as to husbands.

And so, in coming to this passage in Ephesians 5, it would be hard to overstate the importance of verses 22-33 as they relate to marriage. We have already considered what Paul said to the wives; we come today to what he had to say to the husbands. And, regardless of what our national and cultural background may be, these teachings for wives and husbands apply to all nations in every generation until the end of time. Often in our twentieth century arrogance we feel that we have gotten beyond the teaching of the Word of God, but circumstances show that when we disregard the teachings of Scripture, the results are disastrous, whether it has to do with marriage, or with anything else.

Wife abuse is becoming a major problem in our country. That is bad enough. But twice this past week, once in my reading and once in personal conversation with a man who is in a position to know, it has been called to my attention that wife abuse is a growing problem in Christian homes--or perhaps I should say, in the homes of couples who profess to be Christians. There are different kinds of abuse. A wife can be abused physically, and she can be abused mentally and

emotionally. Of course, physical abuse carries mental and emotional consequences with it. Many husbands abuse their wives who never lay a hand on them to hurt them. Often this kind of abuse goes on in the homes of men who are looked upon as Christian leaders, men who spent time counseling others on marriage problems.

The marriage and home situation in our country is alarming. Therefore, it would be difficult to select a passage of Scripture that is more needed in our day than this one.

As I have mentioned, we have already considered what Paul wrote in verses 22-24 to the wives. I hope that, as we read over those verses, the Spirit of God will remind all of us of what those verses mean. But now let us move on to verses 25-33. I probably will not get to all nine verses today because there is much here that we must not hurry over. And let us remember that, while they are addressed primarily to husbands, they are important for all of us to know.

First of all, let me make . . .

I. SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

Paul presupposes, or assumes, that his readers have some previous understanding of three subjects:

A. The Genesis account of the first marriage.

Ephesians 5:31 is a quotation from Genesis 2:24.

Therefore, although we will not do this today, I would like to suggest that all of us go back and read Genesis 1 and 2 again to refresh our minds when God created Adam and Eve, brought them together as husband and wife, and of the things that God said about marriage at that time.

The second thing that Paul assumed that the Ephesians were acquainted with was:

B. The Gospel.

This is apparent in verse 25. When Paul spoke of Christ giving Himself, He had reference to what the Lord did when He died upon the Cross.

So, if we are to understand marriage, we have to understand the Cross, we have to understand the Gospel, we have to understand what our Lord was doing when He died on the Cross. And there is a great deal of misunderstanding at this point even among

Christians. The more we understand the Cross, the better will be our understanding of marriage.

Closely related to this point about the Gospel, is another point which needs to be mentioned separately. It is a point that Paul had discussed earlier in this Epistle. It has to do with:

C. The Church.

Of the nine times that Paul mentioned "the church" in this Epistle, six are in this fifth chapter: vv. 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32. (The other references are 1:22; 3:10, 21.)

Unless we understand what the Church is, i.e., who is a part of the Church, and what the Church's relationship is to Christ, we cannot really understand the relationship between a man and his wife.

Most people, then, and many Christians among them, are either totally lacking, or seriously deficient, in their knowledge of that which is essential in understanding marriage. A man and a woman will be attracted to each other, eventually get married and have a family, but they do not have the slightest idea that God has anything to do with marriage, nor that He has left us a Book which gives us the knowledge that they desperately need.

I am not going to take each one of these up before we consider this passage because their meaning and importance will come out as we go through the passage verse by verse. But I do want all of us to understand how very important these three subjects are. And each of us needs to keep learning about them so that in our homes we can be living the way God wants us to live, and we can experience the joys of marriage that God intended for all of us to have.

But now look with me at:

II. THE DIVISIONS OF OUR TEXT.

It seems to me that we can separate these nine verses into three divisions:

A. The exhortation to husbands.

Are you not amazed at the simplicity of Scripture? If this Book of Ephesians were merely a work of man, the least we would have would be a whole volume with perhaps two or three or four hundred pages. But the

Spirit of God led Paul to express the husband's one and only responsibility in just five words in the Greek; translated into English we have just four words: "HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES." Everything else that the Lord has said in His Word to the husband about his relationship to his wife, is based upon those four words. If a husband does not love his wife, nothing else that he does for her will satisfy her; nothing else that he does for her will satisfy the Lord!

We will come back to that in a moment.

My second point will be:

B. The two illustrations of love.

These are to be seen in verses 25b through 31.

And I will show you why I say that there are two illustrations.

Please look for these two statements in your Bible:

- 1) "As Christ also loved the church," in verse 25.
- 2) "So ought men to love their wives as **their own bodies**," in verse 28a.

The dictionary tells us that the word as is used to introduce illustrations and examples. So Paul was saying, directed by the Holy Spirit, that we have two examples to show us how a husband is to love his wife:

- 1) He is to love her as Christ loved, and continues to love, the Church.
- 2) He is to love her as he loves himself.

The third and last point is:

C. The final summation.

This is found in the last two verses: 32 and 33.

Please notice from this that Paul was not speaking primarily of the home, but of the Church. And he wanted his readers to see that the true home, the true Christian home, is a miniature illustration of what the Church is. Christ is the Head of the Church, "which is his body" (Eph. 1:22b, 23a); the husband is the head of his wife who is related to him just as the Church is related to Christ.

I hope that this gives you an overall view of what Paul was saying in this passage so that, as we go over the

individual verses, we will be able to see how they relate to each other.

I do not have much time left, but let me get started with the details of our text. This will bring me to my first point which I have already mentioned:

III. THE EXHORTATION TO HUSBANDS (Eph. 5:25).

I mentioned a moment ago that, out of all of the things that the Spirit of God could have had Paul write, this is the one thing that He singled out: "Husbands, love your wives."

He could have said, "Provide for them." He could also have said, "Protect them." He could have reminded them that they needed to place her first above all others, and that no one else was to occupy the place in his thoughts, his plans, as well as his affections, as she was to have.

Spurgeon spoke of this love as a love of complacency, that is, a love of delight, of contentment, of satisfaction. It is a love which needs no other. If there were no other person in the world, such a husband would not feel any lack or loss. The love of others is precious to us, too, but none can take the place of a wife in the heart of a true husband.

Paul had far more in mind than just a physical relationship (although that was a part, and a very important part). He was speaking of the outflowing of the love of God in the husband's heart toward his wife. Paul told the Roman church in Rom. 5:5b that:

. . . the love of God is shed abroad
in our hearts
by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.

And the outflow of that love is to be first and foremost from a man's heart to his wife. A husband is to love His wife with the same constancy that God loves us, His people.

Just recently we memorized 1 Cor. 13 in Sunday School. Husbands, have you ever read that through, or quoted it, thinking especially that Paul was there describing what your love for your wife ought to be? Let me read it to you, and, as I do, you see how you measure up to the distinctive characteristics of this portrayal of divine love.

We husbands are to love our wives in the same way that the Lord loves all who are His people. No husband has ever fully measured up to that standard! Why, then, has

the Lord set such a standard for us to reach? May I suggest two reasons? There may be more, but I will just mention two:

- 1) The first is this: God has set the standard so high so that we will realize that it is only by His grace that we can possibly reach it.
- 2) The second is this: That standard is too high for us ever to reach, but God has ordained it that way so that we will always realize that we can love our wives more than we do now.

Concl: But now let me leave you with this thought, and I will be developing it as we go on next week in this same text. It is this: Christ is the Example for every husband to follow.

It is easy for us to feel good about ourselves just because we are not making the mistakes that a lot of husbands are making, and because we may feel that we measure up with those who are better than most. But we must not be satisfied with those who are simply better; we must pattern our lives after the BEST--and the Best is CHRIST!

Study the Word to learn all you can about Christ's dealings with His people. He is your Model. Do not think that because your wife is not sympathetic with you, or because there may be some things about her disposition that you do not like, that you are excused from following our Lord as a husband. Did the Lord choose us because we were lovely, because we had no spots or wrinkles? No, there was nothing lovable about us when the Lord set His love upon us. And even after He saved us, we have displeased Him more than we like to think. But He has never given up on us. His love has never faltered in any way. This is the way we need to be with our wives. And if we will only remember that we are far from being perfect, then, as we seek to become more like the Lord, our wives will also have the example of our lives to follow, and together we can help each other toward our divinely-appointed goal of becoming like our blessed Lord.

This is the purpose and the glory of a Christian marriage. May God enable us to be toward each other as husbands and wives, all that He intends that we should be!

CHRIST, THE MODEL HUSBAND
Ephesians 5:25-27

Intro: Last week we spent our time getting acquainted with this latter part of Ephesians 5. And I pointed out to you that, after Paul had said that the husband's primary and all-inclusive responsibility to his wife was to love her, he used two illustrations of the way a husband is to love His wife. The first Example is Christ (as we see in verse 25). The second example is the husband himself: he is to love his wife as he loves himself. This week I want us to consider Christ; next Sunday, the Lord willing, we will look at the second part as we think of the love a husband has for himself.

And so, as we come to our text for today, Paul was teaching the Ephesian believers here in verses 25 through 27 that the husband who wants to be a good husband must study Christ. Christ, in His relationship with His Church, is THE MODEL HUSBAND. There is no example greater than He! He is the Ideal! No husband can possibly go wrong if he seeks to be toward his wife as Christ is toward the Church. In this, as in everything else, Christ is absolute perfection!

Therefore, it is not surprising that Paul, in a sense, seemed to digress from his subject in these three verses. And yet he was not digressing. He could not have been more on target with his subject. He was describing what Christ did, and what He continues to do, in His relationship to the Church of which all of us who believe are a part. So let us go through these verses to learn what we need to learn about Christ.

Paul said here that Christ did one thing, but that one thing had a threefold purpose.

The one thing is expressed in these words:

. . . even as Christ also loved the church,
and gave himself for it (or, for her).

The threefold purpose, or we could call them three purposes, are indicated in our text by the three times that Paul used the word "that." (Point them out.)

And so Paul has laid out the divisions which we need to follow in considering what he had to say. We have:

- 1) The outstanding characteristic of Christ toward the Church: L-O-V-E.
- 2) The greatest expression of that love: He "gave himself for it."
- 3) The threefold purpose:
 - a) "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

- b) "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."
- c) "That it should be holy and without blemish."

I expect that these verses will not only be helpful to those of us who are husbands, but it will help all of us understand more about the Lord's dealings with us. The three verses before us today are three very, very wonderful verses. But let us begin.

I. THE OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRIST TOWARD HIS CHURCH: LOVE (Eph. 5:25a).

Paul was teaching us here that all that Christ ever did for His people, all that He is doing now, and all that He ever will do, is an expression of His love for the Church.

This has always been true of God's dealings with His people. It is true when we go through the hard times in our lives. It is true when it seems that the Lord has forsaken us, and that He has forgotten all about us. It true even when we neglect Him, or turn away from Him. Always, under all circumstances, the Lord's love for us never changes, and He never does anything with us except it is in love.

Let me go to the OT for an illustration of this truth. It is found in Jer. 31:3:

The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying,
Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:
therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

What was the situation in Judah when Jeremiah wrote those words? The nation was in rebellion. They were going into captivity. They had sorely grieved the Lord over and over again, throughout hundreds of years, and yet the Lord's love for His people had never changed; it was the same that it always had been!

Coming into the Gospels and reading of Peter's denial of the Lord, the question after that was not whether or not the Lord loved Peter, but it was whether or not Peter loved the Lord!

What a lot of worthless worry and anxiety and often depression we would spare ourselves if we would remember this truth! I have said it many times before, and I say it again today: **WE CAN GRIEVE AND DISPLEASE THE LORD WITH OUR WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE, BUT WE CAN NEVER DO ANYTHING THAT WILL CAUSE HIM TO STOP LOVING US.**

But I must not forget that Paul was writing especially to husbands at this point. You see, husbands, we have to understand this about the Lord's love for us if we are to understand how we are to love our wives. Our wives need to know that we love them, that we always love them, and that even when we have our disagreements with them, we never stop loving them. And they need to know that everything we do with them and for them is always motivated by our love for them. We must aim at never letting them feel that we love them less than we did, or that we have stopped loving them completely. Let me read it to you again:

Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ also loved the church.

But let me go on to the second point.

II. THE GREATEST EXPRESSION OF THAT LOVE (Eph. 5:25b).

"He gave himself for her."

I do not think that anyone can possibly doubt but that Paul was speaking here of the Cross of Christ. Our Lord Himself said in John 15:13,

Greater love hath no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his friends.

So this is the greatest expression of love: the Lord gave Himself for His Church.

Now when the Lord died on the Cross, His death was certainly sufficient for every sinner who has ever lived. But Paul was saying here that the purpose of Christ in His death had to do with His Church, with the people mentioned in Eph. 1:4 whom the Father had chosen "before the foundation of the world." Christ knew His Bride. He did not die hoping that there would be a Bride, nor wondering who they might be. He knew them. He loved them. And He gave Himself for them. The Lord did not die merely to provide salvation; He died to save His Church. He accomplished our redemption. The outcome of the Cross was never in doubt. It was not a questionable victory. It was a glorious triumph on behalf of all of those whom the Father had given to Him.

But let me go back to what I was saying about this being the greatest expression of our Lord's love: He gave Himself for us.

Chapter 1 of Ephesians tells us about all of the spiritual blessings God has given us in Christ, but this is the crowning Gift of all of His gifts: the Father

gave us Christ, and Christ has given us Himself!

Do you remember the words of that wonderful old hymn? It is not in our Hymnal. I wish it were. It goes like this:

Loved with everlasting love,
 Led by grace that love to know;
 Spirit, breathing from above,
 Thou hast taught me it is so!
 Oh, this full and perfect peace!
 Oh, this transport all divine!
 In a love which cannot cease,
I am His, and He is mine.

Christ would never have been our Savior if He had not given Himself for us, and to us. He is our Redeemer and He is our Life. I hope He is your Savior today. You need Him. You will never get to heaven without Him. Come, repenting of your sins, believing that His death was sufficient for your sins, however great they might be, trusting Christ, and Christ alone, to be your Saviour.

But let me go back to those of us who are husbands for a word or two. Do you who are husbands know that this is the point at which most marriages fail? Husbands, we may give their wives a house, a nice car, beautiful clothing, all of the necessities of life, and even a lot of the luxuries thrown in, but if we do not give ourselves, we are failing as husbands.

Illus: Many years ago now there was a young married woman attending the Tuesday Bible Class. She was strikingly beautiful, and she had a very handsome, very wealthy husband. He built her a home that in those days cost about \$100,000--today it would be worth probably five times that! She had lovely clothes. He gave her a new car every year. Whatever she wanted she could have. But that marriage ended in divorce. I met with her husband and tried to get him to see the mistake he was making. His wife expressed it to me in this way. She said this, calling her husband by name, "He has given me everything but himself!" She was thankful for all that they had, but all of those gifts without him meant nothing to her.

"Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for her." Is that true of those of us who are husbands? If we are taking Christ as our Example, it will be!

But now my last point--in three parts. Why did the Lord give Himself for the Church?

III. THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S GIFT (Eph. 5:26, 27).

It was a threefold purpose. Have you marked the three times Paul used the word "that" in these two verses? Each time they could be translated, in order that, suggesting a threefold purpose.

Here they are:

- A. "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

Christ gave Himself for us, to save us, and this includes not only our justification, but our sanctification.

How are we sanctified in a practical way? "By the washing of water by the word." The Lord Jesus said,
Now ye are clean through the word
which I have spoken unto you (John 15:3).

The Psalmist asked,
Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
by taking heed thereto according to thy word.
(Psa. 119:9).

This is important for all of us to know, but, since we are thinking about husbands, it is important for husbands to know that they are responsible to see that their wives are being exposed to the Word of God for their own sanctification.

- B. "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27a).

The Lord is not satisfied with what we were, nor even with what we are, but with what we shall be!

Husbands, do you remember how beautiful your bride was on your wedding day? You knew that she was beautiful, but she was more beautiful then than she had ever been before.

This verse tells us that she ought to be more beautiful to you now than she ever has been IF YOU HAVE BEEN DOING YOUR JOB AS A HUSBAND!

Spots and wrinkles are imperfections. Wives have them, but husbands have them, too. Paul was not speaking of physical blemishes, but of moral imperfections.

How do you get rid of them? By complaining and criticizing and always finding fault. No, Paul said that you love those spots and wrinkles away. That is, by showing your love, by acting in love, by treating your wife the way the Lord has treated you (and me) over and over again, exercising grace and patience with us, we will see those imperfections gradually disappear, and our wives begin to take on more and more of the loveliness of Christ.

And that brings me to my last point.

- C. "That it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27b).

This is the husband's goal as far as his wife is concerned. This is when the work will be finished. This is glorification.

Do you remember what we read at the beginning of this Epistle, in chapter 1, verse 4? (Read.) The ultimate object of our election in Christ is our complete transformation into the likeness of Christ. This is the object that the Lord has in all of His dealings with all of us, but this in particular is the object the husband has in his relationship with his wife. What a beautiful picture of marriage this is!

Concl: I do not believe for a moment that Paul was saying here that the wife is not responsible to God for her own spiritual life. She is responsible. But, in addition to that, Paul was saying that the husband is also responsible to see that his wife is daily making progress spiritually.

And how are we as husbands to do this? By criticizing our wives? By arguing with them? By leaving them alone? The answer to all of these questions is, NO! We are to help our wives in their walk with the Lord by loving them, and treating them, and teaching them, and praying for them, and being patient with them, the way the Lord is with us.

Husbands, the more we are like Christ, the more our wives will want to be like we are so that they can be like Christ, too. And then we will also have that joy of all joys of seeing our children walking in the truth, following us as we lead them to glory. May the Lord teach each one of us to be the husband or wife that He wants us to be, and which He will enable us to be.

WHY SUCH A MODEL WHEN CAN NEVER REALLY COPY IT? SO WE WILL ALWAYS BE SEEKING TO IMPROVE.

ONENESS IN MARRIAGE
Ephesians 5:28-33

Intro: It would have been impossible for the Apostle Paul to have put marriage upon any higher relationship than he did when he compared a husband's relationship with his wife to that which exists between Christ and His Church. There is no greater illustration of love that Paul could have used than that of Christ and His Church. The Church never is what she ought to be, but Christ always is what He ought to be. Therefore, any argument that a husband might have about his wife's unworthiness is destroyed before he speaks of it. The love of Christ for His Church is the greatest of all loves, and gives us the ideal of what a husband's love for his wife should be.

Paul had already explained to the wives that the husband is the head just as Christ is the Head of the Church. See verse 23. Therefore, this means that in marriage, a relationship is established between a man and his wife that is just as close as that which we have in a human body between the head and the rest of the body. A man and his wife are no longer two, but one. This does not mean that they have ceased to exist as two separate persons, but it does mean that the one can never act in anything but harmony with the other. The marriage is to be what God intended that it should be. And this point is addressed more to the husband than to the wife. It is more likely that a husband may seek to live independently of his wife than vice versa.

To bring out what Paul wanted the husband to understand, he spoke of:

I. A HUSBAND'S LOVE FOR HIS OWN PHYSICAL BODY (Eph. 5:28, 29).

This is not something that is wrong. It is not something that requires a seminar. A husband does not have to be taught to love himself. It is in his heart by nature. God put it there. Man would not survive if this were not a part of his nature.

A woman has this, too, but Paul here was speaking especially to the husbands. And there never has been an exception to this for, as Paul said here, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh."

Was Paul appealing to man's pride? Was he suggesting that we ought to concentrate on the kind of self-love that we hear so much about today? Absolutely not! Paul never encouraged a man or a woman to be proud. He was speaking of the natural concern we have for ourselves

which he described with the words "nourisheth and cherisheth." And he used these words to describe how the Lord cares for His church. What are we to understand by these words?

The word "nourisheth" is a word that Paul only used in this Epistle to the Ephesians, and he used it twice: here, and in 6:4 where Paul told the fathers regarding their children that they were to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

So it is important for a husband and a father to know what this means because he is responsible to nourish his wife, and he is responsible to nourish his children. And Paul indicated that every man should know what this means because he is continually doing it for himself!

The word nourish means to provide, and to continue to provide, that which will sustain life and promote proper growth and development. The object of nourishment is to bring to full maturity.

Now we are speaking at this point about FOOD!

Just as a husband is careful to see that he eats good nourishing food three times (or more) each day, so he is to see to it that his wife is sustained day by day with that which is necessary for life and health. He does this for himself because he loves himself; he is to do it for his wife for the same reason. One of the greatest joys of a husband is to provide in this way for his wife.

What about "cherisheth"?

This word also is used only twice in the NT: here, and in 1 Thess. 2:7 where we read,

But we were gentle among you,
even as a nurse cherisheth her children.

According to one reading of Acts 13:18 in which Paul was describing God's care for the Israelites in the wilderness, he indicated that the Lord "bare" them "as a nursing father." You see, a nurse is not only some person who is hired by parents to care for their child, but fathers can be nurses, and mothers can be nurses--as Moses' mother nursed him for Pharaoh's daughter. The Lord even told the people of Judah,

And kings shall be thy nursing fathers,
and their queens thy nursing mothers . . .
(Isa. 49:23).

And so the meaning here is the provision of that care and protection which wives need. Some commentators believe

that the two words, "nourisheth and cherisheth," speak of feeding and clothing, on the one hand, and protection, on the other hand.

Men do these things for themselves--that is, any man who is worthy to be called a man. To nourish and cherish one's own body is a natural instinct which God has given to each one of us. There are always those who recklessly disregard it, but it is there even in them.

From this foundation Paul then made the application to marriage.

II. A HUSBAND'S LOVE FOR HIS WIFE (Eph. 5:28, 31, 33a).

Now we are in a position to understand what the Lord revealed about marriage in Genesis 2:24, the verse which Paul was quoting in Ephesians 5:31. When a man marries, he leaves the provision and the protection that he has had under his parents, and he assumes that responsibility over his wife, caring for her as he cares for himself, because he and his wife have been so united that he cannot after marriage really care for himself unless he is also caring for his wife. THEY ARE ONE!

This is what love is. Love is tenderly and carefully seeking to provide all that is necessary for another, guarding and protecting that loved one in every way possible. And in marriage the husband is not doing it for someone who is separate from him, but for one whom God has made one with him. It is a husband's great joy to do this; it is a wife's great joy to be cared for in this way.

Let me right here make a really old fashioned point, one that is as old fashioned as the Bible itself.

When wives started going to work during World War II, something began which has become more responsible for the breakdown of the home than anything else: the husband no longer was the sole nourisher of his wife, nor was he any longer the sole nourisher of his children. His wife began to share in that. And this basic Biblical truth regarding marriage is now violated in millions of homes. I know there are arguments as to why wives have gone to work, but before we present all of our reasons, we need, as the Lord's people, to see this basic truth and to know that with this truth, as with any other that we find in the Word of God, there is a high price to be paid when we violate it.

Now let me add another word.

Paul has, in this passage, been intermingling the teaching regarding Christ and the Church with his teaching regarding husbands and wives. Therefore, this gives me the liberty to say that when a husband nourishes and cherishes his wife, he not only does it regarding food and clothing and housing and protection, but he is to do it with regard to the things of the Lord! Wives need to be nourished spiritually. They need to be cherished spiritually. This means that husbands are to make sure that their wives are learning with him the truth of the Word of God, and that they are walking with him in obedience to the Lord. The husband is both the teacher and example for his wife, and also for his children when they come along. He needs to be just as concerned about his wife's spiritual life as his own. He will only make true progress spiritually as his wife comes along with him because she is one with him. To neglect her is to neglect himself.

Oh, that we as husbands would really learn that truth, and live accordingly.

But I have one more point, and then the conclusion.

III. CHRIST'S LOVE FOR HIS CHURCH (Eph. 5:29b, 32).

Here is something for your heart and mine. This ought to be of help to everyone of us who belongs to the Lord. And it ought to especially helpful to every husband, or young man who expects some day to become a husband.

Paul's example of what it means to nourish and cherish is the Lord. These two words sum up all that He is continually doing for us. He is bringing us to maturity as His people. He teaches us. He protects us. He provides all that is necessary for our growth in grace. He never gives up. He is patient and forgiving with us. He does for us what we cannot do for ourselves: He strengthens us. He controls all of our circumstances, both what we call "bad" as well as the "good," and He makes sure that the effect they have upon our lives is always good.

Just as wives are one with their husbands, so we are one with Christ. Just as the husband is the head of his wife, so Christ is the head of the Church. "This is a great mystery." Do you remember what a NT mystery is? It is truth that was not previously revealed, but now has been made known. How unbelievable that we should have such a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and just as unbelievable that He would exercise the love and faithfulness that He does toward us as His Church! Let

your heart dwell on these truths until you overflow with praise to the Lord for the evidences of His love for you and for all who are united to Him in salvation.

Now let me take Paul's conclusion as my conclusion because that is what verse 33 is: a conclusion.

IV. THE CONCLUSION (Eph. 5:33).

On one occasion when our Lord was giving His disciples a lesson in humility, He took a towel and went around and washed their feet. Afterwards He said,

If I then, you Lord and Master,
have washed your feet,
ye also ought to wash one another's feet.
For I have given you an example,
that ye should do as I have done to you
(John 13:14, 15).

And then He gave them this Beatitude:

**If ye know these things,
happy are ye if ye do them**
(John 13:17).

That is true of all of the teaching of Scripture: the joy of knowing the Word is really withheld until we do what the Lord in His Word tells us what to do. I can say all that I have said today in trying to explain what Paul wrote to the Ephesian church long ago, and it may have been a blessing for you to hear what I have had to say. I trust it has been a blessing. But the greatest blessing will come when we do what Paul has told us in this passage to do. Verse 33 is a conclusion to all that Paul had written to the wives as well as to the husbands.

So as a final word to the husbands, he said, "Let every one of you so love his wife even as himself."

And the final word to the wives was this: "And the wife see that she reverence her husband."

For the husbands this meant that they were to love their wives joyfully, faithfully, patiently, tenderly, always keeping before them our dear Lord and Savior as the greatest of all examples.

For the wives this meant, if she were to "reverence" her husband, that she was to be fearful of grieving him in any way, but that she would count it her greatest joy and delight to do all that would make her the wife to her husband that the Lord wanted her to be.

Concl: If we are faithfully trusting the Lord to enable us

to do His will as husbands and wives, then our marriages will not only be as happy as we had hoped that they would be, but even happier.

If we could see things the way the Lord sees them, we would probably realize that the most alarming thing that has taken place, and continues, in our day is the destruction of our homes--divorces, violence in our homes--husbands with wives, parents with children, sometimes children against parents-- and all for one main reason: we have left the Lord out of our lives. The price in terms of ruined lives cannot be calculated. And the tragic events go on, and even get worse. What a day for those of us who know the Lord to get well acquainted with the Lord and His Word, and then seek with His blessing and help to live our lives as He wants us to live them. It will not only glorify Him, but will enable us to show, even in these evil days, that our homes can be places of peace and joy if we submit ourselves to the Lord and to each other to do His will.