

“Your New You” (cont.)

The Family of God

Ephesians 5:7-17

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Jeff: Greetings, brothers. And I want you to know that I miss you and look forward to being with you again. Hopefully that will happen at sometime in the near future rather than in the far distant future. And I'm glad to at least be with you in this way. As you can see I have a different background. It's not a computer background. It's my summer home. No, it's not; it's my home in Gibsonia. No one is home right now, so I thought that maybe I would record from my house. And what I want us to do is that I want us to continue to look at Ephesians chapter 5, and we'll just take a small portion of it. Today I want to read to you from God's word. It's Ephesians chapter 5. And I'll start our reading in verse 7.

“Therefore do not become partners with them. For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says,

*‘Awake, O sleeper and arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.’*

“Look carefully, then, how you walk: not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

And I'll just finish right there for the time being. I want us to think about what we looked at last week just ever so briefly. I want us to remember that the last time we were together, the last week we were together, we thought about the context of the Ephesian believers. And we especially thought about the temple of Artemas, of Diana. And we thought about how it had to do with magic, and how oftentimes the superstitious folks who believed in the cult of Artemas would have believed that she had the power of magic over them. And so for instance, somebody just converted out of the Artemas cult and being taught rightly, thought they were believers, they may have walked by the Artemas cult and had a doubt as to whether or not it was their sinful nature, as the Christians were telling them, that was indeed pulling them into the Artemas cult, or whether it was Artemas herself who had cast a spell on him. And that's why he was feeling drawn to return to the Artemas cult. So there's a lot to do with magic and the black arts, and those kinds of things that were really prevalent at that time in Ephesus and in other parts of the world at that time.

But Paul would say, “No; that's the darkness that's in you. That's your own sin. Don't walk according to it. Be children of the light. Walk in the light as you are in the light,” that sort of thing. And so what Paul is simply saying to them is this. He's saying, “Be your new you.”

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And what he means by that is this. Don't have any partnership with those works of evil. Don't have any fellowship with them.

And you have to understand again that idea of fellowship as it comes from the early Christian church. We oftentimes think about fire hall fellowship. That's the way we think about fellowship: gathering around after a service: gathering around after a service, drinking coffee together, visiting perhaps about the sermon we just heard, or perhaps more likely about the work we're doing or what we're going to anticipate doing, or maybe even some kind of a sporting event.

But that's not the idea when it comes to the New Testament. When you think about the New Testament and you think about fellowship, you think about *koinonia*. Have no fellowship with these deeds of darkness.

Well, what does Paul mean? Well, that kind of word literally means a partnership. Don't have any partnership with them.

Think about the word *koinonia*, that idea of partnership as it comes out in that word. Think about two men going into a business venture together. One says, “I have this much capital,” and the other one says, “I have this much.” And they say, “Well then, let's partner together and let's form a business and go forward together in this partnership.”

That's the idea. In other words, I bring blood sweat and tears and capital to this venture, and you do too. We have skin in the game. And therefore we're going to make this business work together; we're partners.

That's the kind of thing he means. So when he talks about the Philippians who are his partners, who have *koinonia* with him in the gospel, he's talking about how they have skin in the game. They have partnered with him in the gospel oftentimes economically, sometimes by way of prayer and so spiritually. But the idea is that they've partnered, they've got *koinonia* with him in this venture.

And what Paul is saying here is this. He's saying, “Have no partnership with the deeds of darkness.” In verse 8 he says, “You were of the darkness. But now you are light.” There's a distinct difference that is in you.

And it's not just language. In other words, it's not just labeling. It's not just that we've taken off one name tag and put on another. For instance, if we're at a party and we have these name tags on, it's not like I would go up to Don and take Don's name tag off and take my name tag off and put mine on him and his on me, and so now I'm Don. And everyone knows that he's not Jeff and I'm not Don. But we've just exchanged name tags.

But that's not the way of it in the Christian life. In the Christian life it's more than just a designation switch. There's a real change that has overcome the Christian, and we're going to talk about that change. But the idea is what we've already been talking about, and that is that there is a real identity change that has happened because I am now in Jesus Christ. And it's not just a tag or a name or a designation switch.

And so, for instance, when the Ephesian believer is tempted, when he's tempted and he walks by and he says, “I'm not sure if Artemas is pulling me into that temple or if it's my own sinful nature,” one of the things that he should realize is this. Yes, he does have a sinful nature that is enticing him back to his own sins. And yet that old sinful nature no longer defines him. It has actually been put to death and there's a corpse in him. And yet

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that sin which characterized the living out of that old Adam in him remains and needs to be cleaned up in him. That’s the work of sanctification.

And that happens. You know, it happens in every age. It doesn’t just happen in the age of the Artemas and Diana cult. It happens, for instance, in Geneva, Switzerland.

I found an interesting quote from John Calvin in his sermons to the people in Geneva when he was preaching through the book of Ephesians. He says, *“They”*—certain women, that is, *“are decked out in peacock fashion, so that a man cannot pass within three feet of them without feeling, as it were, a windmill sail swirling by him.”* In other words, it’s not just the Diana cult that you walk by and feel a sense of pull. But it’s in Geneva, Switzerland, it’s here in Pittsburgh. It’s wherever you may happen to be. And yet, if you’re in Christ you have a new identity. And those desires no longer define you.

Now I want you to understand something. We have to realize that there’s a real power and pull to sin. And we’re kidding ourselves if it’s not the case. And it looks to me that now I’m not alone. So I’m going to have to say to those who have just intruded into my affections to quiet down for a few minutes, and I’ll try to finish up without disturbance.

But I want you to realize that sin is a real problem in life. I went to visit my brother-in-law who was in a therapeutic prison because he had abused drugs. And we were sitting there one evening talking. And while he was talking to me he looked up and saw the TV in the waiting room. And he noticed, I think, that it was that show “Intervention” that was on. And he saw someone shooting up with drugs. And he said, “I’m glad I’m in these four walls, because I don’t know if I could control myself outside of here.” In other words, I need that external bondage, as it were, to keep me from doing the very thing I desire to do.

Now that’s not the Christian. The Christian doesn’t need that external bondage, the four walls of the prison, to keep us from sinning. Why? Because we have an internal change that has created in us a love for God and a desire for Him.

Now of course we don’t always choose according to the desire for God that we have that ought to be a priority in ourselves. Sometimes we make the dumb and foolish decision to pursue the sin that led us away from God to begin with. But we regret it and we repent of it. And we turn back to God, knowing that we have forgiveness in Jesus Christ and we pursue Him with more and more strength and vigor.

But again the idea, something that I keep coming back to, is what Paul has been saying. You were in darkness; now you are light. The idea then is that there’s an internal change that has overcome me by the power of the regenerating Spirit, and so the change is within me. I don’t have external barriers that keep me from my sin. I am kept from my sin because of the internal work of the Spirit. So you were what you no longer are. And so he says, “So walk in this.”

Now, in other words, let that sink in. You’re a saint. So be who you are. And let me just put it this way. The way Paul puts it is this. He says, “So walk in the way that you are now.” In fact he says, “Walk” a number of times.

Look in 4:1. He says, *“Therefore I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling.”* And then verse 17: *“Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.”* And in 5:2 he says, *“And walk in*

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love, as Christ loved us.” And then in 5:8 he says, “For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light.” And then in 15 and 16: “Look carefully then how you walk.”

And so what he’s saying is, repeatedly he’s saying that you need to walk in a different way. In other words, you need to walk in a manner worthy of your calling.

Now let me put it like this. What he’s saying is this. Because of what’s been done in you, you’ll have a different walk. In other words, you don’t have a different walk because something external constrains you to walk that way. It’s not like we have leg braces on that force us to walk in a certain way, if we can put it literally. No, there’s something inside of us that compels us to walk in a way different than the way we used to walk.

Now I want you to think about this for just a minute. Why does he use the idea of walking? It’s the word *peripateo*. And perhaps if you’ve heard of peripatetic teachers you know what that means. It means a teacher who walks about. Aristotle, Plato, those were the peripatetics. They used to walk around and teach their disciples.

But what Paul has in mind here is not simply walking in its most literal sense. What he’s talking about is a manner of life that ought to characterize you. And so what he’s saying is, let there be a certain manner of life characterize you that arises from the identity change that has happened within you.

Now he goes on to say that there are two ways that this walk will characterize us, that this new manner of life will distinguish us. First of all he says, “Be wise.” And second of all he says, “Be filled.” Now I’m only going to address “be wise” at this point. Let me address “be filled” later.

Someone may say to you, “Well, wait a minute. What is wisdom?” Well wisdom, in the sense of Ephesians, is something very straight forward and plain. Look for instance in 1:8. “*He lavished on us all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will.*” In other words, in 1:8 what wisdom is is the revelation of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In other words, for those who understand the gospel of Jesus Christ, you are in fact wise. You may not be the smartest person in the world. You may not be a mathematician or a chemist. But if you know the gospel of Jesus Christ, the saving gospel, then Paul says that you have the wisdom of God lavished upon you.

Now that’s a wonderful thing, isn’t it? Because what you find in 3:7 is, “*Of this gospel I was made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me by the working of His power.*” And then in 3:10 he says this. “*So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God.*” (What is that? It’s the gospel.) “*The manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*”

In other words, what is he saying? He’s saying that the wisdom of God is in the gospel. And it’s revealed to us. It’s been lavished on us; our eyes are opened to it and we understand what it is. We have forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ.

But he goes on to say that this preaching of the gospel is to be known not just to the humans in this world, but it’s a proclamation of victory to rulers and authorities even in the spiritual places. And so what it is, it’s a declaration of victory.

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So we oftentimes think about wisdom as sort of a culmination. And I’ve said this to you before. There’s data, there’s knowledge, there’s understanding and there’s wisdom. Wisdom is what we ought to do with the understanding we have.

But that’s not the way Paul is defining it or describing it here. How he’s describing it here is the person who knows and believes the gospel, the person who lives out the gospel. That is the wise person.

We’ll come to what it means to be filled. But for now let me simply remind you of this. The person who is walking in a manner worthy of his calling, the person who is walking in such a way as to reflect the identity that is now characteristic of him in Christ, that person is wise. That person walks in wisdom because he walks in the gospel.

Well brothers, that’s all I’m going to deal with today. I’ve got people making faces all around me, and it’s just a horrible thing. But that’s life. And so anyway I’m now going to retreat to my vacation home. Where did I say it was? In Switzerland? No, I think it’s Gibsonia, right here. Anyway, I’ll be talking to you next week. The Lord bless you.