

Are We Good?

Ephesians 5:1-21

Once upon a time there was a community of people who lived beside a great river.

One day a stranger came to visit this isolated community to learn more about them.

Everyone sat down on the ground beside the great river to eat lunch.

... While they were eating this great big crocodile (14 feet long) suddenly came up out of the water a bit off a man's arm from the elbow down ... and then just as quickly descended back into the water.

Immediately everyone reacted in fear and horror.

... then just as quickly as the crocodile had vanished everyone calmed down as a few shuttled the man off to treat his severed arm.

Within a few minutes everyone was back to eating and talking as if the whole violent ordeal hadn't even happened!

The visiting stranger was obviously confused.

"Didn't you just see that 14-foot crocodile chop off that man's arm??"

Those sitting near the visiting stranger heard him but responded to his question with disapproving expressions.

One villager said, "Sir, this happens a number of times every year but in our culture, it is inappropriate ... it is improper in our culture to talk about crocodiles, or their attacks."

The visiting stranger then started looking around the crowd and realized that were people throughout the group with terrible scars as well as missing arms, legs, hands, and feet.

... He soon discovered that that everyone in the village had someone in their family who had been wounded or killed by a crocodile.

... Yet, no one spoke of it because in their culture it was considered inappropriate to talk about such things.

So, time continued, and villagers continued to lose life and limb ... but no one said or did anything.

In this story the crocodile is SIN.

It wounds and destroys lives and relationships ...

... it causes hurt, sorrow, and pain ...

... but no one talks about it.

Oh, we talk about the sins we are not guilty of, those we don't struggle with ...

But, in truth, because sin is a "taboo" topic, then so is obedience.

Well, today Paul is going to talk about both—sin and obedience.

God's children are saintly royalty therefore they walk in love, light, and wisdom.

1. Christians Walk in Love

In the previous chapter Paul tells us how Christians should NOT walk ... 4:17 "You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do" ...

In this chapter Paul tells 3 ways Christians are supposed to walk ... and the first one is love.

Whereas the Gentiles walk in darkness in the futility of their minds ... we are to walk in love

... and Paul describes that love in this chapter.

... it is love like the love Christ has for us.

Paul actually describes this love in **verses 25-32-read it**

Christ gave himself for us

- So that HE might sanctify us
- Purify us through the Word of God
- In order that we might be in splendor
- Without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing ...
- Holy and without blemish

(Paul's usage is the word blemish is to point back to the Passover lamb that was to be without blemish—Jesus was the ultimate Passover lamb ... Jesus gave himself for us so that we might be as holy and pure as He is.

- Jesus loves us as He loves Himself
- He nourishes and cherishes us
- We are going to be “one flesh” with Christ (Flesh is sarx—one body)

This is the kind of love we are supposed to walk in.

... and in verses 3-7 Paul tells us the kind of things we will avoid if we are walking in love.

These things are sin, and Paul takes the time to explain exactly what sin is....

... there are four truths about sin Paul wants us to know.

First, sin is behavior, **action**, visible disobedience to the laws of God.

- Sexual immorality and all impurity
- Filthy foolish talk
- Crude joking or jesting

Certainly, this isn't an exhaustive list, but you can see that this list Paul is talking about sinful actions ...

...actions other people can see this.

This is external disobedience ... but there is more to sin than just how someone behaves.

Paul also illustrates that sin is a heart **motive**.

- Covetousness ... or greed
- Paul (in verse 5) says that covetousness is idolatry.

This is something that is happening in the heart and mind that no one can see.

... if you try you can cover it up, fake it, pretend

But then Paul steps in closer and he says to us (in verse 8) **“for at one time you were darkness.”**

Not “were in darkness” but “were darkness”

That phrase alone illustrates the power of sin that exists in everyone of us before we came to Christ.

I want to illustrate this by first showing you a short video and then telling you about it.

This video comes from the trial of Adolph Eichmann.

Otto Adolf Eichmann was a German-Austrian Nazi SS leader and one of the major organizers of the Holocaust.

He oversaw the logistics involved in the mass deportation of Jews to extermination camps during WWII.

After WWII ended, Eichmann fled to Argentina using false papers.

In 1960 he was discovered and arrested by the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad and put on trial for his crimes.

In this video you will see a man by the name of Yehiel De-Nur ... a prisoner who was at Auschwitz, who is testifying against Eichmann.

... Eichmann had murdered De-Nur friends, personally executed many Jews and presided over the slaughter of millions more

... Yehiel De-Nur, who had miraculously escaped death in Auschwitz.

De-Nur testified at the Eichmann Trial on 7 June 1961.

SHOW VIDEO

You saw that during his testimony De-Nur described Auschwitz as the “planet of the ashes”.

... However, at a certain point, he became restless and as the judge tried to ask him if he could answer more questions, ... Yehiel De-Nur became so distraught he cried out and collapsed on the floor ... he was unable to give any further testimony.

Later, in a 60 Minutes interview, Mike Wallace asked De-Nur what he had been feeling there in the court.... What was going through his heart and mind when he saw De-Nur and collapsed.

Was he overcome by hatred?

... by the horrifying memories

Was this post-traumatic stress?

De-Nur said that when he looked directly into the face of Eichmann, he suddenly realized that Otto Adolph Eichmann was no demon.

... He was not a superman either.

Yehiel De-Nur said he suddenly realized that Eichmann was just an ordinary like all of us ...

... and when he realized that De-Nur suddenly became terrified about himself.

He told Wallace "I was afraid about myself," De-Nur said. "I saw that I am capable of being exactly like him." ... "Eichmann is in all of us."

... everyone of us left to ourselves was capable of doing the exact same things.

De-Nur's remarkable statements caused Mike Wallace to turn the camera and ask the audience the most painful of all questions:

"How was it possible . . . for a man to act as Eichmann acted? . . . Was he a monster? A madman? Or perhaps was he something even more terrifying . . . was he normal?"

You see, we want to pretend that notorious awful, villainous, violent, and depraved people are somehow "sub-human"

... they are worse than us ordinary folks.

That's not what Paul says.

Paul says that before we came to Christ "we were darkness."

Sin is evil external disobedience; Sin is evil internal motives ... and sin is powerful

... it dominates, rules, enslaves us.

But there is one thing more.... Sin brings guilt.

Paul says (v. 7) that the “wrath of God” is upon the disobedient.

In verse 5 Paul says the “guilty” have “no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Christians walk in love and that means Christians seek to OBEY.

... in fact, it is **absurd** to think that encouragement to avoid disobedience to God Or that exhortation to obey God is somehow legalism.

What could be more illogical than for someone who Paul calls a “saint” someone who Paul says “has an inheritance in the kingdom of God” ... to NOT WANT TO OBEY!

... I’m not saying Christians are perfect ... you know that’s not true

... It is only logical that a saved person would have the desire to please the Savior.

2. We Are Light

Paul says, “Now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light.”

In fact, the fruit of light is found in all that is **good, right, and true**.

The word “fruit” is an important word.

Fruit speaks about that which is good, and right and true.

For example:

The bible speaks about the “**fruit of the Spirit**” versus the “**works of the flesh**.”

Here Paul speaks about the “**fruit of light**” versus the “**unfruitful works of darkness**.”

The unfruitful works of darkness are shameful.

We (the children of light) are supposed to expose them.

The difference between what we WERE and what we now ARE is as different as NIGHT is from DAY. (should be)

... and the only thing that can EXPOSE the “unfruitful works of darkness” is the light.

Notice, Paul doesn't say “condemn” he says “expose.”

What is the best way to expose the sorrow and shame of this “sexual immorality and impurity” that Paul spoke about in verses 3-5?

... Live the life of verses 21-33

As **husbands and wives** submit to one another

Wives respect and reverence your husband in the same way the church is supposed to honor Christ

The word often translated ‘submit’ is the word ‘hupotasso’ which literally translated means “*under the charge of*”

This word doesn't mean a wife is a second-class person it means the husband is responsible to protect and cover his wife.

... the husband is supposed to spiritually lead his home.

As Christ is the head and covering of the church so **the husband is to be the head and covering** over the wife.

Husband love you wives as Christ loves the church

Husband should love their wives as they love their own bodies and their own selves.

The greatest way to expose immorality is for Christian husbands and wives to live as one flesh, in love and honor ... and in the roles that God has clearly defined.

And back in verse 21 Paul tells us the motivation for this kind of loving marriage ... “out of reverence for Christ.

What is the best way to expose the sorrow and shame of the “filthy, foolish talk and crude joking?

... to speak words of thanksgiving (v.4)

... don't get trapped by deceitful words ... words of flattery. (v.6)

... Awake! Rise up from your spiritual deadness!

... Paul says if you do this the light of “Christ will shine on and through you.”

Vance Havner had a sermon entitled “Getting used to the Darkness.”

Ian Paisley preached a sermon entitled “Awake! Awake! You Sleeping church!”

- Christians walk in Love
- Christians walk in Light

3. Christians Walk in Truth

Walking in wisdom means to take full advantage of your time on earth to walk in love, to walk in light, and to expose the unfruitful works of darkness ... because the days are evil.

The word “wise” that Paul uses is connected to the word wisdom in the book of Proverbs which is the word “Hakam”

... the word “Hakam” means to have the ability to make a distinction.

... the ability to distinguish between acting good or acting bad

... living right and true or living wrong and false.

AND I WANT TO MAKE IT CLEAR; Being WISE is not less than being MORAL.

... both are important.

Wisdom is the ability to properly distinguish between two opposing things.

If you know God's Word AND you are honest about the motives and desires of your own heart ... the you are going to make wiser decisions.

... you are going to be wise enough to choose the will of the Lord over you own desires.

Look at verses 18-20

Notice how Paul contrasts being drunk with being filled with the Spirit.

Get this ...

What Christ gives to us permanently is what the lost world is trying to get temporarily through drunkenness.

That's interesting.

Alcohol is a depressant.

... not that it causes depression but that it "depresses" part of the brain.

Drunk people achieve a sense of joy because the brain is "less aware" of your problems.

The Holy Spirit operates on the exact opposite principle ... The Holy Spirit makes you "more aware" of your resources in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit makes Jesus Christ so real to you, you sense the wonder and glory of Christ so much that it causes joy

... joy that presents itself in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

... joy that puts a melody in your heart.

... joy that evaporates dissatisfaction and fills you with thankfulness.

In John 16 Jesus tells the disciples that He is going to send the comforter, ... and Jesus says, **“When the Holy Spirit comes will glorify me.”**

HERE IS WHAT IS SO WONDERFUL!

This is what Paul wants us to get.

“Obedience to God, walking in love, light and wisdom is proportional to your joy in Jesus Christ!”

There is none so obedient as the happy the Christian.

If this is true, who wouldn't want to be filled with the Spirit?

Who doesn't want Christ's joy to be filled in them?

Who doesn't want their hearts filled with the melody and song that comes from knowing and living in close intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ?