

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

Sermon title: Paul's Revolutionary News to the Church, Ephesians 5

Date preached: August 6, 2017

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OVERVIEW: The title of my message is "Paul's Revolutionary News to the Church" and I'll be reading from Ephesians chapter five.

Three points to my message today:

1. God's example helps us know the right way.
2. Holy living is a byproduct of being light in the world.
3. Marriage is a symbol of Christ and his church.

A Review of Ephesians -

First, GOD'S EXAMPLE HELPS US KNOW THE RIGHT WAY—This sounds like a statement of the obvious, but indeed, as believers, we must continually evaluate whether our actions follow God's example.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:1-2 *¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

EXPLANATION: Following God's example should preface every topic in this chapter. How do we know God's example? We know it because Christ was God incarnate, so therefore, if we follow Christ's example, we will be following God's example.

In this chapter, Paul deals with immorality, impurity, greed, language, wise living, moderation, and husband and wife relations. If we start out by following Paul's first instruction to follow God's example, then we'll have a healthy framework from which to learn and discuss Ephesians Five.

Let's talk more about following God's example—

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:3-4 ³ *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.* ⁴ *Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*

Sexual immorality, impurity, and greed are lumped together in one sentence. Paul lumps together three types of bad language and says to trade them for thanksgiving.

Paul tells the results of unholy living –

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:5 ⁵ *For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

Paul tells the results of unhealthy words –

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:6-7 ⁶ *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.* ⁷ *Therefore do not be partners with them.*

Paul's admonition to be alert and not fall into deception immediately follow the sins he mentioned: sexual sins, impurity, greed, and language. I believe he did this because people who fall into deception typically fall into one of these sins.

APPLICATION: Modern day people and our problems and our temptations seem to be very much like the problems and the temptations of ancient Ephesus. I believe it was Solomon who said nothing is new under the sun.

So - God's example helps us know the right way, and

Second, HOLY LIVING IS A BYPRODUCT OF BEING LIGHT IN THE WORLD.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:8-14 ⁸ *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light* ⁹ *(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)* ¹⁰ *and find out what pleases the Lord.* ¹¹ *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.* ¹² *It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.* ¹³ *But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.* ¹⁴ *This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”*

Paul’s words come to us following Chapter Four where he told the Gentiles to quit acting like Gentiles. It was expected for Gentiles to live as heathens with no moral compass, but Paul told the Gentiles that now that they were believers and followers of Jesus Christ, they had a new way to live. They had a new purpose for living, and therefore, they should have a new disposition.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:15-20 ¹⁵ *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,* ¹⁶ *making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.* ¹⁷ *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.* ¹⁸ *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,* ¹⁹ *speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,* ²⁰ *always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In this chapter, Paul proposes several trade-offs. Now that the Gentiles are at Ephesus:

- Trade darkness for light.
- Trade your lack of wisdom for wisdom.
- Trade your folly for seeking God’s will.
- Trade your drunkenness and raucous life for life in the Holy Spirit.

Let’s review:

- God’s example helps us know the right way,
- Holy living is a byproduct of being light in the world, and

Third, MARRIAGE IS A SYMBOL OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

I want to look at the section about husbands first. If Paul were writing today, perhaps he would reverse the order and cover the husband's section first. Notice the instruction for husbands is more than three times as long for the instruction to wives. While it's been a while since I heard anyone preach from this chapter, I feel as if the Scripture to wives is the one which gets the focus and that the Scripture to husbands is treated as more of an afterthought.

Let's look at verse 25:

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

We know about the life of Christ. We know why he came. We know he set the example of holiness, led a blameless life, and gave his life on the cross for those who believe in him—those who are also called the church. We know he was completely unselfish. How many husbands make their entire existence all about sacrifice for their wives?

If Paul said nothing more than this one verse, we husbands would have our work cut out for us. But, he goes on to explain more about Christ's relationship to his church:

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:25-27 ²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her* ²⁶ *to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,* ²⁷ *and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

I believe we are safe in saying several things about Christ and his relationship to us, the church. He is patient. He is kind. He never gives up. He's constantly challenging us to have more faith and be more like him. Obviously, most of the time, we, the church, fall miserably short, don't we? Paul talks about Christ

washing with water through the word of God; creating a beaming and beautiful church which is: *“without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”* In other words, Christ works with his church to help her become what she needs to become.

Let me ask you husbands: When was the last time you told your wife you loved her? If you don't do that on a regular basis, then you need a good swift kick in the rear end. When was the last time your actions to your wife expressed your love for her? If you don't do it every day, then you need a second swift kick in the rear end. When was the last time you worked with her and helped her become the beaming and beautiful person she wants to become? Or do you spend your time putting her down and pointing out her flaws? If that's you, then guess what? You really don't deserve your wife. You have your assignment straight from the Scripture.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:28-30 ²⁸ *In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.* ²⁹ *After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—* ³⁰ *for we are members of his body.*

We should care for our wife's well-being as much as we care for our own.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:31 ³¹ *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”*

I realize I'm speaking to a lot of older husbands, whose parents are already deceased, but I am sure there are some younger husbands who need to hear this—and here it is: husband, your father and mother should not be directing your marriage! They should stay out of it, and it is your responsibility to keep them out. If you have a father or mother who is trying to direct your marriage, your work is cut out for you – DEAL WITH IT, and protect your wife from your own parents. Perhaps they are trying to direct your marriage because you're not man enough to direct it without them. If so, again, DEAL WITH IT. And for any single men listening to me, do not get married if you are not ready to leave your father and mother!

ILLUSTRATION: About three years ago, a young couple who do not go to this church came to see me. They were engaged to be married. I listened as the woman expressed her concerns about her soon-to-be mother-in-law. It was clear to me the man's mother was way too involved in his life as an adult, and he was not strong enough to take care of it. In our meeting, he defended his mother over and over, so I came up with a solution: I told them not to get married. This wasn't what they wanted to hear, but then again, my advice was free!

In verse 32, Paul reminds us he is talking about the church:

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:32-33 ³² *This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.* ³³ *However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

I'd say probably ninety-nine percent of Christian married couples have no clue whatsoever that marriage is a picture of Christ as the groom and the church as his bride. And someday when Christ returns and takes his bride, then Christ and his church become like husband and wife. Paul explained it best when he said *this is a profound mystery*.

Now let's read the section I skipped. Go back to verse 21.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:21 ²¹ *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

It is interesting how Paul started out his section on submission this way. Now since the husbands have had their instruction, here's the instruction for wives.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:22-24 ²² *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.* ²³ *For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.* ²⁴ *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

EXPLANATION: After I beat up on the men, the Scripture to wives seems pretty simple, doesn't it? I believe – listen to me here –

If husbands love their wives like Christ love their church,
If husbands realized their existence is to build up their wives like Christ builds up the church,
If husbands loved their wives so much they'd be willing to lay down their lives for her like Christ did for the church,

then verses 22 through 24 would happen naturally.

Let's look at the day and age when Paul wrote this. Women were treated as property. When Paul said to believers to quit acting like Gentiles because they now, through Christ, had a new perspective on everything – he also meant it in the marriage relationship. If you don't know the history of the day, you may not realize what Paul was writing to the people at Ephesus. Paul elevated the status of wives by challenging the men to love their wives like Christ loved the church.

Some of you won't like what I am about to say, but from experience; I can tell you it's true. In my thirty years in the ministry, I've encountered several women I would consider *out of control*. All they did was stir up things and dominate. In each case, without exception, the husband was weak. The years of not being loved by her husband and the years of not being built up by him were manifest by being dominating and out of control. *The root of the issue went back to the husband!*

The status of women has changed since Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus. Back then, women were not doctors, educators, airline pilots, nor were they leaders of countries. It is highly possible, in my opinion, Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus about a specific problem: wives were out of control because their husbands were not loving them. The reason I say this is because Paul wrote another letter to the church at Galatia where he said in Galatians 3

SCRIPTURE: Galatians 3:26-28 ²⁶ *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,* ²⁷ *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* ²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

CONCLUSION: While I believe there is validity to these Scriptures about submission in Ephesians, we must also look at the day in which Paul gave this instruction. I believe the overall context is a spirit of love and Christlikeness, not of ownership and domination.

I hope the men still like me after today's sermon!

The title of my message is "God's Revolutionary News to the Church at Ephesus." In its day, Paul's instructions on how to live were completely revolutionary. People had never heard it before, and his letter to them was intended to bring order.

If you've never repented of your sin and received Jesus, you aren't living life to its fullest.

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Thanks to Judy Andrews and Nancy Claire Smith for their editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee
USA