

“What Does The World See In You?”

Ephesians 5:15-33

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June 8th, 2008

God show us how to live and how to worship Him!

When I was 28 years old, my life was out of control. I had been married and divorced; thankfully no children. I was doing well financially, actually too well for my maturity level. Too much money, at least the perception that you have more than you need, takes me back to some previous verses here in Ephesians.

Chapter 4:17-19 says, “*So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*”

At that time I was a gentile. My thinking was futile, my understanding was darkened and I was certainly separated from the Lord. My heart was truly hardening. Whenever the subject of God came up, I laughed at how ludicrous it was to even consider a god. God was dead! God was dead! Nietzsche has said so! I wanted to believe it so that I could be my own god. Ted Turner called God a crutch for insipid people who couldn't stand on their own. Ted Turner was my hero, a self-made man like me.

My attitude was, if you don't cook my meals, pay my bills or sleep in my bed I don't care what you think about me. I didn't care if you liked me or detested me. I didn't need anybody.

While it is said that opposites attract, and that may be true for some, it is also said that birds of a feather flock together and we did. The crowd I associated with all had egos bigger than the building. We used to see how much we could out do each other.

We all hung out at the same club, a restaurant and nightclub where everybody knows your name. We were all there typically 5-6 nights a week. The alcohol flowed freely and drugs became the after hours party favorite at somebody's house. We all took turns and thus Paul's words in verse 19 came true: *Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.* We lost all sensitivity and we gave ourselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity with a continual lust for more. More, more, more! We couldn't get enough. Sometimes no sleep for almost 72 hours on some weekends. I realize now that I was literally burning up my body.

While I now see this lifestyle as a self-destructive one, God was doing one of two things here: He's either allowing the heart to harden even more to the point of destruction or,..... He is using the process to break me in half. And that is what Jesus did by His grace. Why me? I have no reason that I can comprehend. Perhaps now you know why Ephesians 2:8,9 are so precious to me. *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.* I was formerly dead in my sins and Christ redeemed me from the pit. **Isaiah 38:17** - *Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back.* **Psalm 103:3-5** - *who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.* **Jonah 2:5-7** - *The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the*

earth beneath barred me in forever. But you brought my life up from the pit, O LORD my God. "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple."

Perhaps this why God's grace is so astounding to me!

Then four (4) years later the Lord brought beautiful 19-year-old Godly women into my life. The difference of 13 years between our ages back then seemed inappropriate to many, but through 25 years of growing together we're closer than we've ever been. She wasn't perfect by any means and was rebellious in her own way, but God was at work and here she and I are today as a testimony to His grace and plan. *"with God all things are possible."* I'm living proof of that.

There's a lot of material here in these 18 verses. I'm going to break them into two categories: 1) living on target, verses 15-21, and 2) the house codes, verse 22-33.

Let's read the verses together: *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 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. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

This section of Paul's letter actually goes from 5:15 through 6:9, but to give that to you all at once would be like trying to get a drink out of a fire hose. John Calvin actually takes these 27 verses and breaks them down into 7 sermons. I'm going to do it in two(2), so put on your wetsuit.

Remember the theme of what God is giving us here. The Lord is showing us how to live as children of the light of Jesus Christ and how we are to worship Him.

Let's keep this simple if we can. The theme of this section is this: **Be careful how you live!** No, that's not what Paul says. Paul says, *"Be 'very' careful how you live!"* The Greek here says *"See therefore, that you are careful....,"* emphasizing an acute awareness of how you live.

Paul then tells us how to do that. I'm not going to speak to each one of these or we would be here for hours.

First, Paul says, *"..be wise not unwise."* Or *"..be wise, not foolish."* Paul's form of teaching was by contrast. Now some of these contrasts may make you go "duh!" But let me warn you about taking that attitude. The greatest weapon of the Devil is deception. When you say to yourself that you already know what Paul is saying, you have been deceived into thinking you don't need to worry about it; you've got "that one" under control, you've got that one covered. The Lord Jesus is saying to you this morning, *"Examine "every" situation and be wise!"*

Next Paul says, *“Don’t be foolish, but understanding through the gift of discernment, so that you may know what God’s will is for “your” situation; not your neighbor’s situation, not your friend’s situation, your situation.* After that Paul says, *“..be filled with the Spirit of God instead of the spirit of alcohol.* Paul does not say that it is a sin to drink alcohol. In Paul’s time, wine was often the only drink that many could drink without getting sick due to the unsanitary water conditions. Alcohol kills the bacteria. Wine was served at almost every meal. But what Paul is saying here is that being drunk leads to stupid behavior and a poor witness.

In the early church they used to have what were known as “Agape Feasts or Meals” that were eaten around each worship service, but eventually they had to be discontinued because of the drunkenness and gluttonous activity that resulted. All God’s gifts require discernment. That’s where the difficulties arise.

Paul next tells us how we are to speak to one another; with Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Does Paul mean that we are to sing whenever we talk to someone? Of course not! Paul is saying that we are to speak with the same language we read and sing; in the language of the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. We do that during worship, singing not only to God, but to each other.

Paul says sing and make music! God has given us vocal chords to communicate and sing to Him and to each other. Paul says use them.

Verse 21 moves in a new direction and in many translations this verse is isolated as an independent thought. This verse is asking us to submit to each other out of reverence for Christ. Now I could stop right there and preach a whole sermon on this verse. Wow! Here’s where the rubber meets the road. But the verse speaks for itself. You might want to meditate on that verse for this whole coming week.

Verses 22-33 are perhaps eleven (11) of the most difficult verses to bring forward into a modern application context. Martin Luther wisely labeled these verses “House codes” versus “Church Codes.” However, they have been intertwined together over the centuries in an effort to justify agendas of sinful mankind in the church as well as the home.

These verses, I believe, are not intended to focus on authority as a basis, but rather on the self-giving love of both Christ and the husband for the “benefit” of the wife. Did Jesus take a bullet for His bride the church? You bet He did! Now Jesus is saying, love your wife in the same way as I do my bride.

In Genesis prior to the fall, there was a total equality between Adam and Eve. God created both of them equally in His image and thus their essences were identical. They would have lived in perfect harmony with each other and with God forever.

We often conclude that the result of the fall was death, and it was, but there were other ordinances that God instituted. **1)** Adam would have to work for his food and there would be weeds among the wheat, etc. **2)** Eve would have pain in childbirth. That implies that before the fall, giving birth would be painless and joyful. **3)** Eve would have a desire for her husband. Too often this word “desire” is immediately translated into a physical or sexual desire. Not true! This physical desire was already in place, the same as it was for Adam. God said before the fall, *“Go and multiply.”* After looking at the original Hebrew, I believe what God is saying is that the wife will want to rule over the husband, but because of sheer physical strength, among other cultural issues, God said to Eve, **4)** “Eve, Adam will rule over you. It is not longer equality.” This is not what God intended. Before the fall none of these four curses were in play. It explains a lot.

So what now? You have the “what fors’ and the “whys,” but now what? What you are to do is make every effort to go back and try, as one might, to create the way it was before the fall: mutual authority, mutual love and mutual submission. Paul has said that about all Christians in the first half of our verses and now he carries it over into the specifics of the household.

That’s the trouble we find ourselves in. Sin always leads to trouble. It’s the reason we read the Old Testament first in our Scriptural readings. In the Old Testament you learn of why you’re in the trouble you’re in. The OT

is one long story of how God's people are in trouble over and over again because of sin. Next we read the NT epistles. The NT is given to us to show you how you are to live through that trouble. And, the Gospel is read last because it is impossible to live through the trouble without the power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit that lives within each one of you.

With Christ, you can come as close as your sinful nature will allow you, to walk together as it was originally intended, but there will always be trouble in paradise. It is your curse until death. But that doesn't mean you quit. You have been called to live a life worthy of your calling by Christ Jesus. And by His magnificent grace, Christ shows you how to do that and the promised Holy Spirit within you to guide and direct. Adam and Eve didn't need the Holy Spirit before the fall. They walked hand-in-hand with God in the garden, but you and I, well, we still see through a glass dimly, but a day is coming when we will know as we are known.

**May the Lord Jesus Christ's mercy and grace reign supreme in your life this day and forever more.
Amen!**

Pastor Joe