

His Family and Our Family
Ephesians 5:1-21
Part II
April 27, 2008
FBC Waynesboro

This passage is set before us with a beautiful balance. The first 20 verses of Ephesians 5 address what for Paul is the priority and primary environment in which believers are to live out our lives: the household of faith, the family of God, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 21 is a summary sentence consisting of three components that tie together beautifully the ten principles that are proclaimed in verses 1-20. And the next nineteen verses are all about life in the family. His family and our family. Twenty verses about His family and nineteen about our family with one verse in the middle that ties it all together. But the balance that is in this passage does not proclaim at all the balance to which we are too often very wrongly beckoned in our day.

The mantra of the masses in our day is that a well-ordered life is a well-balanced life. That may be true in your diet, but it had not best be true for you and me as believers in the direction or expression of our devotion. Some would suggest that we need the kind of life where we hold in balance the discipline of our bodies through exercise, the development of our minds through study and the declaration of our religion through worship. Some would suggest that each needs equal attention and time and none should be overly emphasized. I have even had it said to me very sincerely that loving Jesus is the right thing to do so long as we don't go overboard with it. This modern myth that is a deception of the devil is at best disrupted if not destroyed by the declaration of the Truth of God. It is God who calls us "first," a word that means in Hebrew and Greek that which is so far above everything else that there is really no second; to love Him with all of our heart or will, all of our mind or intellect, all of our soul or emotion/passion and all of our body or physically. Love for Him and His purpose supersedes all else. Or listen to Paul who calls us not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed through the renewing of our minds; all of life focused on loving, knowing, serving, honoring and glorifying our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, it was Jesus who said that the one who does not hate his father, mother, wife, husband, sister, brother and children cannot be his disciple. Charlie Fales reminded me at the end of the sermon last week that if what I was preaching about the family of faith taking priority over our biological families is not true then what Jesus was said was lie.

It is not a balanced life to which God beckons us. It is an ordered life. Life lived out in accordance with His own order which means that for the people of God the praise of God in worship and the learning and living out of His purpose in and through the church among God's people takes precedent over everything else. And here in this passage Paul gives us ten principles about how we are to live out this life in the church in relationship to one another. First, he calls us to MIMIC GOD, 5:1. It is an absolute imperative. It is what we are commanded to do. We are to order our lives according to God's order. And we are to do it this way because God has loved us and called us into His family. We are His children. I am mighty afraid that this sentence does not startle or stun us any more. We are not shocked by it as we should be. We who are by nature children of wrath, sold under the slavery of sin, doomed and damned to hell have been by the rich mercy of God redeemed through the blood of Jesus and brought by His love into His family. When we understand who this God is to us and what He has done for us, we would do whatever it takes to gather with the godly on the Lord's Day no matter what it costs us to do so. Many families find themselves absent from the family of faith for more Sundays than they are present because they are doing other things; such a way of life either indicates lostness that is not seen or spoken or a complete lack of how great God is and how sinful we are so that we do not see what price was paid to purchase our right to belong to the family of God. When the culture in which we live and the church in it lowers its view of God by all but removing attention to His Holiness that requires wrath and elevates its view of humans so that we are no longer worms but worthy, the result is a culture of "Christians" for whom church is a choice and not a commitment.

Here is the second principle. Each builds upon the other here. We have been greatly loved by God so it is an honor and a privilege to join with others in worship, but it requires that we conduct our lives upon the premise of His love for us, 5:2. Here again is an absolute, non-negotiable imperative. It is followed by a word picture of what this life looks like in relationship to God and to the body of believers. It is self-surrendered. It is sacrificial. It seeks to serve God and not to satisfy our desires. It means practically when it comes to our participating with the people of God in the praise of God that we are not asking about what we want to do or wish to do or will to do; but we are seeking simply to honor God by obeying Him. So that on Sunday the horns of the dilemma such as, "well, I've got this that we want to do that is good for our family, but it is Sunday and as believers we are called to worship God with the people of God." That is no dilemma except that we are asked lay down our own desires so that we can do that which satisfies the desires and demands of God. Failure to do so consistently could indicate either that we really do not belong to Him or that we are mocking in our lives what He

did for us in the giving of His life. This is hard. These are hard words. Who wants to hear them?

The third reality here addresses just this concern, 5:3-5. The first word in verse three is “porneia.” It is used in the Bible of all kinds of sexual expression that are outside God’s Word and Way. Now God’s Word and Way is clear: the only acceptable form of sexual activity is between a man and a woman in marriage. Everything else is porn. That is what the word means literally. Now the central word of this text is in verse 5: idolatry. The two together teach the truth of this text. Idolatry is our turning away from the one and only true God to a “god” of our own choosing and creating. And the reason and result for our doing that is porneia. Two truths here: one, sexual immorality in all of its forms is simply the external expression of a self-centered, self-saturated, self-indulgent society. Two, sexual immorality is the most vivid form of a life style being lived to gratify the desires of the flesh. It simply reveals impure hearts that are driven by fleshly desires. So that when someone hears that he family of God is first and we lay down our desires to do what God desires but we don’t desire to do that but we do desire to hold on to “god,” what do we do? We create a god of our own making who makes it possible for us to live as we please while being deceived by the devil into thinking that we are being pleasing to God. The fourth reality follows fast upon this one, 5:6-7. Those who are living out of their own desires while desiring to please God seek out those who will confirm their way of living because they are living the same way. And they participate together in the delightful deception of keeping each other deceived. God says to those who are His, “get away from these kinds of people.” Now let me show you how this works in real life: you have decided that your family is first. You want to be a Christian but you want your family to go and to do and to have etc. When you have made this decision, you turn next to the world and its ways and it allures you and entices you so that weekends become about the pursuit of pleasure. You are having fun. Everybody is happy. Smiles are all around. And Satan is sowing the seeds of destruction in the hearts of your children and you do not see it and will not see it until in the rebellion of adolescence or young adulthood, they walk away from you and the church and you wander where you went wrong.

Number five. This is at the center because it is so central and so critical, 5:8-10. This verse sets before us a real and radical either/or. Once you were darkness. Once you were a sinner going your own way pursuing your own pleasures. BUT NOW you are light. You either are or you are not. And if you are, there is fruit: and the fruit is a life formed by the Truth of God that does what is right because we have been made right with God and by His grace we do what is

good which alone brings glory to God and thus we prove by the way we live our lives in relationship to God and to His people that we really are pleasing to God. Paul puts this at the center because it is central. It is the caution light in our face. It is the mirror that measures us. It pulsates before us with passion. It is God saying that we are either light or darkness and which we are is seen in our priorities and our perspective. This is a word of pleading from God to us to get our lives in order if in fact they are out of order.

This will require, sixthly, that we reject the darkness by rebuking the darkness, 5:11-14. Begin with your own life and your own family. Let the light of the Word of God shine upon your household so that you can see whether or not your family is in order according to God's order. Look at where you are spending your time, your energy and your money. Look at what is controlling and consuming your life. Is it clearly in keeping with what is so clearly communicated in the Word of God? Listen, this text is so powerful because it reminds us that the darkness does not engulf us all at once; it lulls us to sleep. It creeps in little by little. It woos us until it has us and when it has us we will not be awakened except through a radical wake-up call from the Word of God. Such is what Paul is doing here. He calls us next to look carefully at how we are living, 5:15-16 so that we can make the most of the time that God gives us for the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel during the time that God gives us. Look at the next verse, 17. **DO NOT BE FOOLISH.** What is being foolish? It is not knowing what time it is or it is thinking that we have enough time for all that we need to do. It is a failure to know what the will of the Lord is. One of the most amazing realities to me in our day is the number of people whose lives are not in order biblically but who are deeply concerned about knowing the will of the Lord. Read Romans 8 and hear Paul say that the will of God for His children is that we be conformed to the image of Jesus, that we become more and more like Jesus. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-3 and hear Paul proclaim that God's will is to make us holy, set apart from the world and its ways so that we can honor Him by obeying Him. It is more than mischief, it is mockery for a man or woman to want either to discern or to debate the will of God and are not doing in their own lives those very basic things that have to do with the will of God. Don't be foolish; in this time in which we are living it is God's will to separate you out from this sinful world to sanctify you as a part of His holy family so that you can represent him rightly both in your family and in this pagan world.

So, Paul says that we are not to be drunk with wine but we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit, 18. We can be so confused in our culture that we think this verse is about whether somebody can drink or not. Let's be clear about this verse. Wine

represented rich symbolism in the world of that day both positive and negative. Negatively it was a symbol of the pursuit of pleasure by pagan people; it was the staple at parties. This is its context here. Now it stands to reason that one gets drunk on wine by drinking wine. One gets filled with the Spirit by receiving the Spirit and walking in the way of the Spirit. And here is the point of this text. We are either pursuing the path of personal pleasure as promoted in the world, symbolized by wine or we are pursuing the purpose of God as seen in our lives being controlled by the Spirit of God. This is not a both/and. It is an either. Try to chase the world and we become intoxicated; chase after God and we become intoxicated. So, how do we know? Verses 19-20. Here is the evidence. The verbs describe the continual and perpetual activity of the people of God engaged in the praise of God for the purpose of bringing glory to God. And all of it done with grateful hearts because we know how great is our sin and how great is His grace. More than anything else, above everything else; we want to be now where we will be for eternity: gathered with the godly in the household of faith to give passionate praise to God so as to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ who has saved us.

Three words in the summary sentence: we are serving one another as we seek to outdo one another in our care for and concern for one another. And we are living our lives this way because of Christ and what He has done for us. We hold Him in awe. We want to honor and exalt Him in all that we are and do and it begins in our hearts and flows first into our family of faith. It all begins right here.