

Wake Up! (Ephesians 5:1-21 & Proverbs 3:1-6)

10-Dec-2017

We're continuing our series on the Apostle Paul's letter to a bunch of Christians in Ephesus - called the Ephesians.

Ephesians chapter 5 - verses 1 to 21 is our passage this morning

So please have your Bibles opened up there

There's the usual outline to jot down some notes

But let me pray for God's help before we begin...

Intro

A true story to begin with...

Rev Dr Robert South (preaching in 1689) - looked up to see most of the congregation were asleep - including the King of England - William III

The poor preacher was horrified to discover so many asleep

He interrupted his sermon to call out to one of the sleeping officials

"Lord Lauderdale, rouse yourself. You snore so loudly that you'll wake up the King."

(pause)

Hopefully there's no snoring today'

The Apostle Paul in our passage this morning is issuing a wakeup call!

The question is are we asleep?

Are we a Christian here this morning who's fallen asleep on the job - and forgotten what being a Christian is? That's how Paul sees the people of Ephesus - they've fallen asleep? So he's giving them a wakeup call

And this wakeup call is equally applicable to people here this morning who are not a Christian yet - and who also need a wakeup call - to wake up from living a life that's walking away from God

So the Apostle Paul gives 3 wake up calls in the form of commands - here in Ephesians chapter 5:

[Powerpoint 1-3 wake up calls]

1. Wake up and walk in love (vv1-7)
2. Wake up and live as light (vv8-14)
3. Wake up and live as wise (vv15-21)

Walk in love (vv1-7)

First off Paul wants us to *walk in love*

[Powerpoint 2-Walk in love]

To do that we need to follow God's example Paul says in v1 - literally we need to imitate God

We have our Grandchildren visit a fair bit

What I've noticed is they imitate their grandparents a lot - not always a good idea to imitate me, I might add - but they do.

When they arrive - I often put on a funny greeting to them "Olivia" - "Lachlan"

And they copy me - "Poppy!" - "Nanny!"

To imitate someone - we have to watch, listen, understand - learn all about them - so we can imitate them

Then we understand how they tick and understand their character -

It's the same with God - to imitate God - we need to spend time with Him - quiet times, prayer, studying His Word - then we understand Him

Then we understand how His love works

We understand that God loves us so much - and that He sees us as his dearly loved children - as Paul says in v1.

And because of His love for us - God sent His only Son to die for our sin

Because of His love for us - Jesus - sacrificially laid down his life on the cross - dying for people's sin and rebellion against God - which allowed the punishment for sin - which is death - to be paid for - so we can go free of punishment - and be forgiven (if we care to believe in Jesus)

So the Apostle Paul tells the Ephesians and us - that our response to Jesus' love shown to us on the cross

Is to walk in love - and be loving like Jesus is

What might our lives look like - by walking in love?

Our OT reading from Proverbs tell us - not to forget God's teaching - keep his commands close to our hearts - that's how we measure if our lives are pleasing to God - if we love God - we'll follow his rules

It will look like Prov 3:3 - love and faithfulness never leaving us

It should be so obvious to others - that we love God and love others - it's like we have a sign around our neck "I Love God - I love others" - people see us imitating God - and they like it - and they want to imitate God too!

The Apostle Paul also says walking in love - looks like - v3 - steering clear of sexual immorality (sleeping around, cheating, pornography), steering clear of impurity (immoral actions, lustful thoughts), and it looks like not being greedy. Walking in love also means - in v4 - no obscene talk or behaviour (like sexual innuendo), no foolish talk (basically silly talk which can degrade into rude or crude behaviour and foolish talk that amounts to gossiping about others) and no coarse jokes

Remember we are God's children and people are watching us (especially children and grandchildren) - and they will imitate our bad words and behaviour just as quickly as our good words and behaviour - so we need to be sure our words and behaviour are loving - if we are supposed to be walking in God's love

In fact Paul says at end of v4 - instead - we should use our words to thank God for our many blessings - and be grateful for all we have

You see the bottom line in v5 - is that being immoral, being impure and being greedy - Paul says - makes us an idolater - an idolater is someone who worships an idol - in this case the idol we're worshipping by being immoral, impure and greedy - is our self - we're worshipping our self and not God

Worshipping ourselves is the opposite of walking in love - and Paul says living a life of loving and pleasing yourself before loving and pleasing God is the fastest way of NOT getting into God's kingdom

Paul says in v6 - let's not deceive ourselves with empty words

Like saying "I'm a good Christian" and then live a life that pays no attention to God's Word, no attention to God's Son, fails to love God and fails to love others - and shows no Christian love and charity and mercy. Paul is basically saying 'talk is cheap" - our Christianity needs to be seen not just heard

As dear old Mrs T would say - "I want action, Mr Reverend, not words!"

(pause)

Instead we need a wakeup call!

Wake up and walk in love

So let's pause for moment - and I want us to write down 3 ways we'll show the love of God to others this week

(pause)

Live as light (vv8-14)

From verses 8 to 14

The Apostle Paul gives our 2nd wakeup call

Live as light

[Powerpoint 3-Light]

Back to our grandchildren again - our 2 grandsons love toys that have lights on them and they love torches. I took baby Cruz to maccas this week - and bought him a Happy Meal - and the toy with the meal - was a train - with a light on the front. Cruz is not even 2 yet but it took him less than 10 seconds to find the switch for the light

There's something attractive about light - isn't there?

Light always overcomes darkness

I had a fine example of this on my recent holiday cruise - I woke up in the middle of the night to go to the loo - but on my way back to bed with the bathroom light off - it was pitch black - so I was feeling my way back to bed and grabbed hold of Heather's foot - and woke her up!

That's the problem with darkness - we can't see where we're going

We need light

That's the Apostle Paul's point in this passage

He makes a contrast between darkness and light - what he's really comparing is evil and good

Paul says in v8 - we were once darkness - and note he doesn't say we were once in darkness - but that we were darkness. What Paul's describing here is what we are like before we accept Jesus into our lives. Back in Ephesians 2:1 - he described that as being dead in our transgressions and sins against God. So before Jesus we were just darkness - and spiritually dead.

But once we follow Jesus - he says in v8 - we become light in the Lord Jesus. This is only possible because Jesus - the light of the world - overcomes the darkness

of sin and rebellion against God - and allows people to change from darkness to light - when they accept Jesus as the Lord of their lives

So the Apostle Paul wants us to wake up - and walk as light

So what will us - living as light look like?

Paul tell us in verse 9 - our lives should be an imitation of Jesus' life

Living lives as light looks like 3 things

- a) Goodness - which means having a loving kind heart towards others
- b) Righteousness - which means being right with God - having said sorry for our sins - believing Jesus as paid the punishment for our sins - and wanting to follow his rules for our lives - and living a life that is as pure as possible
- c) Truthful - living lives that follow the truth? We only know the truth - by coming to the source of absolute truth - which is in God's Word - as Jesus Himself said in John 18:37 "Everyone on the side of truth, listens to me"

So living as light - will mean we stop and ask our self - 3 questions

- 1. Is what I am about to say or do - full of goodness - that is - is it loving and kind
- 2. Is what I am about to say or do - righteous - does it line up with God's rules for living
- 3. Is what I am about to say or do - truthful - does it agree with God's Word or is it contrary to God's Word

If we can answer Yes to all 3 questions - then we are living as light and not as darkness - and we are living a life pleasing to God as Paul says in v10

Paul then warns us what the darkness is like and that we should have nothing to do with it - in fact Paul says we should expose such dark deeds - bring them into the light - and let these dark deeds be measured against the light of Jesus - God's Word

We've seen darkness exposed in recent years haven't we?

There's been a Royal Commission - investigating child abuse involving churches and youth organizations. Many dark deeds have been exposed

More recently - The Hollywood entertainment industry has had a gutful of inappropriate behaviour by men against women. These dark deeds were done in secret and the perpetrators thought they could get away with it - but women are speaking out and exposing the darkness - and so they should Paul says!

In fact Paul goes as far as to say - in v12 - it's shameful when people waste their lives on things they must do in the darkness where no one will see. They're just kidding themselves - God knows what they're doing in secret - and he wants these dark deeds to be exposed

See v13 - Paul wants us to rip the cover off this dark behaviour and see how attractive it really looks when compared with the perfect light of Jesus

So the bottom line is in v14

Paul says wake up sleepy heads!

He's talking to Christians who've fallen asleep and forgotten they are children of God walking in love and living as light

And he's also talking to non-Christians who've fallen asleep in their spiritual dead life - walking in the opposite direction to God - those who need to repent and say sorry to God and come back to the light of Jesus - and receive forgiveness for their sins - and rise from their spiritual dead life and be born again - born into a new life with Jesus - the light - who will shine is light on them

So again, let's pause for a moment and write down something in your life that is dark and not pleasing to God - something that needs to be exposed by the light of Jesus - and repent of it now - ask for God's forgiveness and help

(pause)

Then wake up! And walk as light - with God's Word as a lamp to your feet

(pause)

Live as Wise (vv15-21)

The 3rd wakeup call from the Apostle Paul is to live as wise person - not as an unwise person

[Powerpoint 4-Wise]

Our OT reading from Proverbs 3:5 - says don't lean on our own wisdom and understanding - but on God's wisdom and understanding. It's a pity our Politicians don't do this...

God is the source of true wisdom

That's Paul's point in v16 - in his day it was dark evil days - and it's the same today isn't it - dark evil days - terrorism - persecution - hatred - war - pending nuclear disaster in North Korea - governments and regimes throughout the world - making ungodly decisions and rules - individuals making choices that are contrary to God's rules...

Paul says we need to be wise - not foolish - see v17 - and determine what God's will is.

How will we know what God's will is for us?

It may sound too simple - but we can only know God's will - by knowing His Word - the more we read and study God's Word - the more we will know what God thinks about every subject - about every aspect of our lives - we will know what he approves of and what he doesn't approve of - and then we'd act accordingly - with Godly wisdom

Remember the Story of King Josiah (2 Kings 22) - during his reign - God's Book of the Law was discovered - having not been read for nearly 60 years!

The king's secretary read God's Book of the Law to King Josiah for the first time
Here's the King's reaction:

¹¹ When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes.

¹² He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's attendant:

¹³ "Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD's anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have

not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.”

King Josiah cried and grieved when he realized that He and His people had not been following God's rules in His Book of the Law.

We are living in such times today - it's like the rulers, countries and individuals of today - have lost the book of God's Law

It's time we as Christians - stood up - and helped them find God's Book again

Paul tells us how to do that - he contrasts two ways to live in v18-21

Way 1 - the unwise way - v18 - is to party - which leads to excessive self-indulgence in sex, alcohol and drugs

Way 2 - the wise way - v19-21 - living lives in step with God's Holy Spirit living inside us - spiritual lives - with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs - praising God for who He is - for sending Jesus -always being thankful for all God's blessings - and then in v21 - out of respect for Jesus - reconciling us with God - through His death on the cross - we should submit to one another. Don't get put off by that word submit - it has a poor reputation as a word today - But in the Greek - it doesn't mean we let people run over the top of us - or use us as a doormat
It means having a voluntary attitude of giving in - an attitude of cooperating - an attitude of respecting the other person as a Christian brother or sister - and

being gracious and respectful to their needs - and not always wanting your own way. Paul says that's wise godly living

Conclusion

So to finish up then

As we are well and truly in the Christmas Season now

It's easy for us to lose focus of what's important to God

So Paul's wakeup call is a timely one!

[Powerpoint 5-Conclusion]

1. Are we walking in love - showing the love of Jesus to others - that's the reason for this season - to show the love of Jesus to others
2. Are we living as light - in these dark evil days - Jesus the light of the world - was born - to overcome darkness - so let's imitate him
3. Are we living as wise godly people - seeking God's will from His Word - and seeking to always please God - in all we think and say and do?

Let's pray...