

Ephesians 5:5-14 "If Christ Is Lord, Is He Your Lord?"

**Ephesians 5:5-14** <sup>5</sup> For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partakers with them; <sup>8</sup> for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), <sup>10</sup> trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; <sup>12</sup> for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup> But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. <sup>14</sup> For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."

There has been an interesting phenomenon in the Church over a number of years which suggests that one can receive Jesus Christ as Savior but not necessarily as Lord, as though that is a separate act which one can choose to embrace sometime after their salvation.

Essentially what this teaching promotes is an "easy-believism", for lack of a better term. It almost takes the attitude, 'let's make the gospel of Jesus Christ as palatable as possible and then once they're in we'll begin to disciple them toward a commitment and obedience towards a Savior who is also their Master and Lord.

What this has led to is people in the Church thinking that it makes little difference how they live unto Christ, since they've got their "fire insurance" in hand. I remember even in my own life as a brand new believer that I wasn't particularly interested in fleeing from the old man because I was assured that God takes you just as you are and understands that you may not want to change for awhile.

Well, it is certainly true that God takes us just as we are. We can't clean up our lives sufficiently to be able to come to God. But, it is a fallacy to teach that it doesn't make any difference to God how we live after receiving His free gift of eternal life by faith in Christ.

We don't have the option to receive Christ as Savior and not as Lord because He is one and the same. How do we separate His lordship from His redemption when it was His lordship, His deity, which enabled Him to take our place as a perfect sacrifice?

It's interesting that all throughout the N.T. Jesus Christ is identified with a specific title which speaks of His authority. Paul continually identifies who this Jesus Christ is with the title which can only be reserved for God.

ROM 5:1 "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our **Lord** Jesus Christ,..."

ROM 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our **Lord**."

ROM 10:9 "That if you confess with your mouth, "**Jesus is Lord**," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Now, obviously simply saying, "Jesus is Lord" cannot be the only qualification for one's salvation. The intent of this verse is to demonstrate one's allegiance through a heart change of faith in Christ which then shows itself in an outward way; not only in what we confess with our mouths, but also through our submission to Jesus Christ as Lord and master.

To receive Christ as Savior is to also receive Him as the Almighty God and Creator He is. This is the Lord to whom we belong and as such we must bow the knee with our lives in humble thanks and gratitude.

And yet people, in many cases, are not being told to consider this aspect of salvation. Not even Jesus Christ Himself promoted such a gospel. Right after His baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist we read:

MAR 1:14-15 "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

The idea of repenting is to make a 180 degree turn from one's former life of self-indulgence and unbelief to embracing God as Lord and Savior as we now walk in a way that pleases Him. In fact, repentance is something which seems to have gone by the

way-side in much preaching and teaching today as though it were optional.

Listen to our Lord Jesus' perspective on this in MAT 11:20 "Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent."

LUK 13:2-3 "Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

Repentance not only involves a heart attitude of turning from believing in self to believing in Jesus Christ it also involves saying no to the world and yes to the Lord and Master who desires us to walk as children of light. And this is why Jesus could say, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance." (LUK 3:8)

And this is what our text this morning is discussing; the difference between a life which pays lip service to Christ as Lord and a life which truly demonstrates that Jesus is in fact the Lord of our lives as well as Savior.

But again, let me be clear; repentance is not something we do in the flesh to get ready to receive the gift of eternal life. It is not a prerequisite to receiving salvation, it is the work of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with our salvation as He opens our eyes to the truth of our sinfulness and enables us to turn from self and turn unto the Lord for life eternal.

In other words, repentance is a work of the Holy Spirit as we employ the gift of faith with a trust in the God who is Lord and deserves our full allegiance. Repenting is turning around and embracing Christ by faith who is our Holy God and desires our holiness with lives of love and obedience.

This needs to be part of the gospel message as much as it was the message of Christ Himself.

**Mark 1:14-15** <sup>14</sup> Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

This was the same message that Paul gave to the Ephesian elders as he was reminding them of the message he gave to the Greeks and Jews of that area of the world.

<sup>NAU</sup> **Acts 20:21** solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

A repentance toward God is a turning to God with a knowledge of who this Holy God is and this is why it is essential that we as believers paint a proper biblical picture of our great God and Savior to whom we urge people to turn to for life eternal.

But again, to suggest that an on-going repentance of turning away from the temptations of the world is an option for the believer is not to understand what it means to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit who is conforming us into the image of Christ on a daily basis and Paul points this out in our text.

EPH 5:5-7 "For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person -such a man is an idolater - has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 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."

This is in the context of what we saw last week in EPH 5:3-4 "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."

What Paul is conveying to these Ephesian Christians, and to us as well, is that it's not enough to name the name of Christ and continue to live as though we never knew Him. This goes back to what he taught earlier in this letter.

EPH 4:17, 22-24 "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. 22 "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

Paul is continuing to put a great deal of stress on living lives of holiness because our heavenly Father is holy and He's the One whose life we now have in Christ. Therefore if we belong to Him by faith and we are new creatures in Christ it would be absurd to live as though we weren't new creatures.

In fact, he tells us that if we are living as though we are not new creatures in Christ then we have no assurance that we are truly one of God's children. That's a pretty hard line to take. Listen again what he says in verse 5.

EPH 5:5 "For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person -such a man is an idolater - has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

The beginning of verse 5 in the Greek could be literally translated: "For this you know, knowing." These Christians had been taught that a lifestyle which proved to be opposite of the fruit of the Spirit was indicative that there was no life in that person as it related to his standing before Christ. They were still dead in their trespasses and sins. They knew that.

There are lots of people today who conveniently play the part of being a Christian and yet their lives are demonstrating anything but true godliness and love for the Lord. Now, it's true that only God ultimately knows the heart of a person. Only He ultimately knows who belongs to Him. And yet here in our text Paul is saying that we have a window to the heart in a sense, which shows on the outside what is often going on in the inside.

Paul says, 'here's an indication of what an unbeliever looks like.' He speaks of being immoral, impure or greedy. He's already touched on these three in verse 3. In fact, he goes so far as to call this type of lifestyle idolatry.

And the reason he calls it idolatry is because it's a lifestyle which places self as the one in control without any regard for submitting to God who says, you shall have no idols before Me, including yourselves.

We don't often associate an ungodly lifestyle with idolatry and yet that's what it is. But the question should be raised, 'why does Paul warn Christians about such idolatry?' Why does he warn them that such people will not inherit the kingdom of Christ and God?

Could these Ephesian Christians have been impostors? Not likely. Paul is making a contrast here. He's giving us a picture of what an unbeliever looks like; one who has no regard for the law of God. One who proves himself to be a rebel against God by the lifestyle he lives for himself.

And by the way, we need to be careful not to suggest that Christians could not in fact fall into such sin. But, if they do fall

into such sin, do they then disqualify themselves from the kingdom of God?

This is an important question because it speaks to our salvation and the security of such a salvation we have in Christ. In other words, if a professing Christian begins to live a lifestyle described here in our text, do they then forfeit their salvation?

The answer is yes, and no. Again, we ultimately don't know the heart of a person, only God does. But we are called to judge according to actions. There are many in the church today who say we must take a hands-off approach to sin in the church because after all, 'who are we to judge?'

And yet it is Christ Himself who says, "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector." (MAT 18:15-17)

How can you possibly do that unless some sort of judgment is made. The same can be said of those who cause divisions in the Church. Paul puts it this way in TIT 3:10-11 "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. 11 You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned."

Again, certain judgments have to be made according to behavior. But in both cases just mentioned, even though we may have to judge, it is a judgment according to the word of God, not a judgment which we devise based on our own standards. And it is a judgment, not a condemnation. Only God condemns and as we saw in Tit.3:11, the person stands *self-condemned*. We don't condemn people to hell.

It is ungodly behavior Paul wants these Ephesian Christians to take note of in the lives of those who don't know Christ and then to examine themselves to see if this kind of behavior is creeping into the camp of Christ.

If it is then the individual will deal with it in one of two ways. He or she will either repent of that sin and turn back to Christ seeking forgiveness; this shows the heart of a true believer. Or that

individual will continue in that sin with no regard for God's word and that too will show the kind of heart which does not seek after God and is a good indicator that they do not know Christ.

It's one thing for the believer to sin, and all believers do. Here in Ephesians Paul is talking of degrees. All believers struggle with the two natures they possess; the old nature we were born into this world with and the new nature we have received through faith in Christ.

But, the life of a believer will be one which is convicted of sin. David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then became a party in the murder of her husband, and for a time he didn't confess and forsake such sin. But, God in His mercy confronted him with his sin through the prophet Nathan and David repented and asked God for forgiveness and he found that forgiveness in God.

But for someone to claim to be a Christian and then have no fruit whatsoever and deliberately turn your back on Christ with such behavior, this warning holds true that such a person will not inherit the kingdom of God because they are fooling themselves and have no life at all.

The same thing is taught in HEB 10:26-27 "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."

This is why the answer to the question: can a professing Christian forfeit his salvation with wrong behavior is yes, and no. Yes, if his profession was nothing more than that. He was never truly born from above. For a true believer he will always be wooed back to his heavenly Father who purchased him with the blood of Christ who said, I will lose none of all that the Father gives Me.

This is what Paul means in EPH 5:6 "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient."

The word deceive carries with it the idea of trying to convince you of something which is not true. And what Paul wants us to be careful of is not to be led astray by people who tell us they are Christians when in fact they are not. Empty words are words devoid of truth.

But that's all these people have; words and empty words at that. Their actions speak otherwise. And so, Paul is basically warning us not to give false assurances to people whose lifestyles are practicing such sin. In many cases these people must be confronted if they are in fact still claiming to be Christians in the context of the Church.

He's saying that those who practice such sin are disobedient to the word and will of God and as such will suffer God's wrath. Now, if we know that someone in this situation will suffer God's wrath, what would be the loving thing to do?

The loving thing would be to come along side them and encourage them to repent of their sin and embrace Christ as Lord and Savior. We do not have the option to live as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds, who are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God.

If we are truly born again, being new creatures in Christ, then we must continually be moving forward in our walk with Christ. Now, granted there may be times when we seem to be standing still and struggling in our walk, but even then the Spirit will convict us of sin, and we have the promise of forgiveness.

1JO 2:1-2 "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the one who turns aside God's wrath, taking away our sins, and not only ours but also the sins of the whole world."

But those who continue to walk without concern for God and His word must be warned that they are on dangerous ground. This is what John meant when he wrote, "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1JO 2:3-4)

Again, we are not saved by our obedience to the law, but if we have life in Christ then our love for Him will prove itself in obedience as the law is written on our hearts. Jesus said exactly that in JOH 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

God is saying that if you belong to Me then My Spirit who indwells you will move you further and further away from your

former manner of life. Why? Because that is the Spirit's ministry, to conform us into the image of Christ.

Now, obviously that takes place as we submit to the Spirit and the word of God. And this is where our involvement in our sanctification takes place. It is only through the power of the Spirit that we can prove ourselves believers in Christ Jesus, but it is done as we love and obey our Lord.

It is through the means of grace which the Spirit of God provides that we can grow in our salvation. If we neglect the means of grace, which is the word, fellowship, worship, and prayer then we are trying to live a spiritual life without the Spirit who provides these things for our edification and growth.

And it is usually at this point that we begin imitating the world rather than being imitators of Christ. And all of those things which could be considered ungodly, that have been mentioned here in our text, are things we find ourselves gravitating toward.

But Paul warns in EPH 5:7 "Therefore do not be partners with them." The NAS puts it this way. "Do not be partakers with them." We do not want to be partakers with the deeds of darkness, because we no longer belong to the darkness of death. We've been delivered from such death.

And so, what Paul then does is to remind them of their past to help them put into perspective what they now possess.

EPH 5:8-12 "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 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret."

We need to be careful not to take this reminder as a way to dig up the past and share it with everyone. It seems today that unless your testimony is full of the world's garbage then it just isn't a testimony worth sharing. The grungier the better.

Well, I would be the first to rejoice with those who have been delivered by Christ from a grungy past. But, sometimes in sharing our past we have a tendency to glorify our past. We never want to forget from what we've been delivered but we don't want to use it in a way that puffs ourselves up by showing how horrible we were.

"For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret." And we who were disobedient don't need to bring such laundry out for the sake of effect. Now, again that doesn't mean that we can't try and identify with the ungodly by saying that we too lived in the world at one time, but that's much different than swapping "war stories" of the past.

But the operative phrase in our text is "For you were once darkness". Paul addresses this darkness in the letter to the Corinthians in a similar way he's done in our text here in Ephesians.

1CO 6:9-11 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 ***And that is what some of you were.*** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

"And that is what some of you were." This is past tense. These things have been put behind by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

We see this again in EPH 2:1-2 "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 ***in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world*** and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."

Paul even includes himself in this cast of ungodly unbelievers who once walked in the flesh of our sinful nature.

TIT 3:3-6 "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,..."

In Christ all things change. Once we were darkness, but now we're light in the Lord. We are to live or walk as children of light. Why?

Because our Savior is the light of the world. If we are imitators of Him then we will walk as though we belong to Him.

Instead of deeds of darkness we will produce the kind of fruit Paul brings out in EPH 5:9-10 "(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord."

Goodness, righteousness and truth. These are the opposites of immorality, impurity and greed which is idolatry. The only one we worship is the one true God, our Lord Jesus Christ who is perfect goodness, righteousness and truth.

But I like verse 10 because it opens the door for continuing to know the mind and will of God. "Find out what pleases the Lord." The word find out in the Greek is *dokimazo*, and it means, to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as with metals.

The way in which we do this is by coming to the only source which can unveil the mind and will of God which is His word. We need to test all things according to His word. We need to examine our lives in light of His word. We need to prove that our lives are conforming to His will according to His word. And we need to scrutinize all things so that we do not fall into false teachings which would lead us astray.

This is why we should "have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. (Eph.5:11-12)

There is no fruit in the world that will please God. It is fruitless. The deeds of darkness only produce more darkness. But the light of God's truth expressed in lives of love and obedience for our Savior, and the light of the truth found in God's word, will expose the darkness and lead many to the light that they too may have life through faith in Christ.

EPH 5:13-14 "But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

It is the truth which sets us free. It is Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead and now gives us His life. His desire is to shine on us in a way where He is lifted up on high. Like the moon which reflects the light of the sun, we are to reflect the image of our great God

and Savior as He draws all men to Himself, using us a vessels through which He shines.

May we never find ourselves asleep. Let's awake and arise that Christ may shine on us in a way that not only exposes the deceit of the world but enables them to see Jesus Christ in our lives with the express purpose of encouraging them to repent of their sins and embracing the only one who can give light and life which will be with Him forever more.

Never forget what Jesus calls every one of His people, which includes you and me.

MAT 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Jesus Christ is Creator, God and Savior. And He is our Lord. May we honor Him as such.