

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of
October 2019

(added progressively after each Sunday)

(see following pages)

Christian Living (A)

based on: S Olyott

(Review of last week)

The Apostle Paul has been emphasising that Christians live differently from other people around them. Already in the context of the local church – unity in Christ – he has shown that we are to behave differently with each other from the way the unconverted behave to each other. Later (chapter 5) he will explain that we will behave differently in the ‘world’.

But now (Chapter 4:17-32) he introduces three elements of teaching on Christian Living:

- Why this teaching is to be taken seriously.
(verse 17) *¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.* The association between the Greek translated as ‘testify’ and the Greek translated as ‘must no longer’ demands that we understand that Paul is **insisting**, commanding, not merely suggesting, that we *no longer walk as the Gentiles do!* But who is he to be insisting?

Yes, he is an Apostle. More than that. The Apostle specifically and powerfully commissioned by Christ Himself to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. By and large that is specifically to us! Nor should we ignore the words ‘in the Lord’. Christ Himself is speaking through this Apostle. That is the authority of the Apostles. He who is sent is as He who sent him. Apostles (meaning ‘he who is sent’) have the full authority of Christ. He Himself said so!¹

It is Christ insisting, that we be different. The supreme reason for us to take this teaching seriously.

[A reflection on ‘mortal man’ is that if Jesus should appear in a vision (which He will never do) saying these same words, we would accept them more readily. These words that couldn’t be more plain: *you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, ...*]

It is Christ who insists that you take notice. If you want to know the will of your Lord for your life. This is the passage.

1 Read John 13:20 – ²⁰ *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.* ; Luke 10:16 – ¹⁶ *“The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”* ; Matthew 10:40-41 – ⁴⁰ *“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”* ⁴¹ *The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward.* ; and especially John 14:23-26 – ²³ *Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”* ²⁴ *Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.*

²⁵ *“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.”* ²⁶ *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

But there is a second reason for it to be taken seriously. At verse 30, Paul pauses 'in mid flight' to add: ³⁰ *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

He told us in Chapter 1, that the Holy Spirit – the Person – living in us, is the 'seal'². On the last day this 'seal' – of the presence of the Spirit – will be the identifying 'mark' of each true Christian. In Romans 8:9 Paul made this very specific: ⁹ *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*

Since the Holy Spirit lives in you, if you live in an unholy way, there is a serious inconsistency in your life! Is it too much to say that you grieve the Holy Spirit? Imagine the situation (perhaps in a far gone age – perhaps not) where a 'street urchin' is salvaged from a slum and raised in a fine family only to return to their former condition when they grow up. Would there not be grief in that nurturing family?

The Holy Spirit comes into a Christian as He converts them. Yes. He is the very cause of their new existence. We dare not cause Him to grieve.

The teaching of this passage must be taken seriously, lest we 'fly in the face' of Christ and grieve His Holy Spirit.

- Why Christians cannot live as other people.

(Verses 17-24) Before we consider Paul's specific words we could summarise his argument as follows:

- because you are different;
- non-Christians behave in a certain way because they think that way;
- our minds have been changed so we are a 'new self'.

(verses 17-19) We learn how the unconverted 'tick'. Their behaviour is a consequence of *the futility of their minds*. Their minds are set on things of no real value: possessions, position, prestige, pleasure, power (five "p"s). While they seek their own ease and fame if they can get it – otherwise notoriety! At the judgement these are of no value.

(Verse 18) While we have a different scale of values and cannot live as the unconverted do, ⁸ *They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.* This is why an unconverted scientist can look at the amazing creation (in all its intricacy and balance) and whereas the Christians bows down before the Great Creator, worshipping Him for His design and loveliness, the other sees nothing! The unconverted – far away from God, can have none of the spiritual blessings – by their very nature they are ignorant of God. One does not become unconverted we are born that way – ignorant of God and His blessings. It is the

2 Paul's earlier life in the sea port of Tarsus, had shown him the merchants' way of identifying the goods they sent to other ports by a special 'mark' their individual 'seal'.

blindness of the petrified (hardness) of the 'fallen' heart, that is incapable of being spiritually aware (discerning). Their outward actions are determined by such hearts that are devoid of God.

(verse 19) What is on the 'inside' shows on the 'outside': ¹⁹ *They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practise every kind of impurity.* They are essentially self-centred and self-seeking. They may be aware that some behaviour is 'unclean' but this awareness will not discourage a greedy following of their 'desires'. To some degree social pressure may inhibit the **action** they admire but this is still reflected in their **speech**.³ Their code of behaviour leaves God out!

A Christian cannot live like that.

(verses 20, 21) Here we have another great "but" in Ephesians. ²⁰ *But that is not the way you learned Christ!—* ²¹ *assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ...*

Becoming a Christian is not just learning a set of propositions, but learning Christ. Not just about Him, but experiencing the Person.

And from Christ you do not learn to be like the unconverted. If you live like the world, no matter what name you claim to yourself, you are not a Christian.

(verse 22) What is it you learn from personal experience of the Lord Jesus Christ? ²² *to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ...* That is to turn from your old ways: repentance. Without repentance you cannot be a Christian. Then (verse 23) you are inwardly renewed – *in the spirit of your mind ...* Therefore since your outward actions reflect the spirit of your mind, you cannot be the same as you when when unconverted.

Also (verse 24) ²⁴ *and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.* You are **remade** in the likeness of God. Adam, before his fall, was first made in the likeness of God. Now through the 'new Adam', Christ Jesus, we are remade in that same likeness. The spirit of the mind now longs for holiness and righteousness to become true.

A superficial reading of this part of the passage may suggest that Paul is saying that when they receive his letter and hear his command they will 'put on' and 'put off' as an act of their own will. But careful attention, shows that he is talking about when they first came to learn Christ. This all came to pass then. Through their coming to Christ. And NOT by 'an act of their own will'!

Therefore you can't live as you did, because 'coming to Christ' changes you to the 'new self', with a new 'spirit of the mind'. A moral transformation in the life lived. Evidence of which is evidence of the cause. The new nature (if you have it) is proved by the new life.

³ There is a caution here for Christians in the choice of TV and other visual entertainment. Many are the sins depicted, which we wouldn't 'dream' of emulating, but it is unworthy of a Christian and dangerous to feed the mind on them.

- Specific ways in which a Christian life is different.
(verse 25) Not to lie in any form. ²⁵ *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another.* Lying is always harmful, never helpful. Especially between Christian members of the 'body of Christ'.

John Chrysostom – an early Archbishop of Constantinople, uses the following, member of the body, illustration. You are walking along and the 'eye' sees a dangerous snake in your immediate path. But says to the 'foot', "There's no danger!" So you tread on the snake and the body dies.

Then there is the sort of lying where in a religious setting, the letter of the law is obeyed but the spirit of the law is forfeited. A Jewish family might believe that they should do absolutely no work on the Sabbath. They understand that they break the law if they turn on a TV during Saturday. So they leave the TV on from before sunset on Friday.

(Verses 26, 27) As well as lying, put away sinful anger. ²⁶ *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,* ²⁷ *and give no opportunity to the devil.* Righteous anger is acceptable. Jesus was angry on several occasions. Be angry only at the things God is angry with. And even justified anger should not last longer than nightfall. A child comes home late and you have been worried or someone in the family lets you down. Resolve it quickly, otherwise you may brood on it. Give way to bitterness and even malice. Finally unforgiveness, which the devil can exploit to nobody's benefit.

(Verse 28) Stealing is obviously wrong. ²⁸ *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.* However, the Bible definition of 'stealing' is stronger than what we might have assumed. Stealing: acquiring anything other than by a gift or your own labour. Meet your needs by honest toil, and not only your needs but also the needy. The divine purpose of labour is to be able to give.

(Verse 29 & 31) Why did God give the gift of reasoned speech. Why not just essential communication like the animals. ²⁹ *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ...* ³¹ *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.*

The gift of speech, is for the welfare of others. Speak only what others need to hear: that will be helpful to them – especially in order to bring them closer to God. *Give grace to them that hear.*

Therefore we avoid bitter words which in the final analysis only serve to project our own hurt feelings. Rage similarly is but an expression of personal frustration. Typically then the changed life of a true Christian minimises one's own self interest.

(Verse 32) Replace all that with kindness, compassion and forgiveness. ³² *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* At the end of this passage Paul brings us back to focus our

attention on the Cross! Reminding us of what Christ has done for us. (Go forth and do likewise.)

[1898]

May it please God that all present, through Jesus Christ, shall have life through His Name.

Christian Living (B)

based on: S Olyott

(Review of last week)

Paul's letter began with three chapters establishing the doctrine of Christian Living. Then from Chapter 4 to the end of the letter, he describes their outcome in the practical details of such a life.

Christians can't live the same way as other people! In fact, true Christians do not live like others because they cannot. They cannot because they are new (changed) creations. Firstly they live differently with other Christians – last week's passage, but also with the rest of the world. During the rest of the week and not just for a short time on Sundays.

This is the 'burden' of today's sermon. There will be an introductory explanation and then three points to follow:

Introduction:

The Christian Life is a 'Walk' not a frenetic set of stops and starts. Not bursts of keenness let down by bouts of malaise, but a steady, constant walk. Perhaps the 'hare and the tortoise' comes to mind. There is a sense of continuity about walking, whereas to run (while more dramatic – "look at me") is to tire. Walking allows constant, steady progress. Allows you to go on and on and on. To in fact 'persevere' in the Christian Life.

Paul advises walking. Verse 2: *walk in love*; Verse 8b: *Walk as children of light* Verse 15: *how you walk – with wisdom*.

In fact these are our three points to discuss: Walk in Love, Walk as children of light, And Walk in Wisdom.

1. Walk in Love (Verses 1-7) While some find these verses confusing, they are actually beautiful in their simplicity. Consider this simple 'picture'. (Verses 1 & 2) Here is a group of children – *beloved children* – they all belong to the same family – God is their father. They are walking together along a certain path. But which path? Follow Father – *be imitators of God!*

Paul has captured Jesus' meaning in the Sermon on the Mount. Follow the Father, who is kind and just to all – the just and the unjust – alike. Christ reveals the secret of living a Christian Life: *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* (Matthew 5:48) Go the way your Father goes – follow Him.

Of course, children in the same family, even when following their father will bicker among themselves. Paul's answer is the model of Christ's love: in that He gave

Himself up for us, in so doing pleasing the Father. The Greek word Paul uses is *Agape*. That love that Christ displays. A giving, sacrificial love, for the benefit of the receiver even at the cost of everything to the giver. Christ's love as shown on the Cross: not only for His people, but also a *fragrant offering to God*. "You children", says the Apostle, "as you walk behind the Father, love (agape) one another even if it cost everything and above all seek in this way to please the Father."

(verse 3) "Father", says one, "look at those people over there. They're walking a different way: immorality, impurity greed."

"Don't even talk that way! How could my children go that way? It's not fitting that you who have been made holy (that is the saints) should contemplate any different way to walk." ³ *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.*

(verse 4) "Ah!". says one of the children, "Those other people are walking the way of filthiness." Talking foolishly. The talk of fools. (A 'fool' in the Bible is one who talks as though there is no God, refusing to recognise that when we talk we do so in the presence of God.) And crude jesting: enlisting humour in the 'service of sin'. How can a follower of the Holy God talk like this? What should come from Christian lips: is thanks!

(verse 5) Those who tread the path of immorality, and set their hearts on things (covetousness), find those things then become their idols. That road does not lead to the Kingdom of God and of Christ.

(verse 6) But the 'world' says to us "Come on. Join us. Walk like us. No harm will come of it!" But the Apostle says that the *empty words* that the world uses commend the very sins that God is certain to judge. The children who do not follow the Father are the children (*sons*) of *disobedience*. That is the certain path to damnation. The children who follow Father (verse 7) therefore have nothing to do with disobedience – even though once they also walked in 'darkness. (verse 8a)

2. Walk as Children of Light (verse 8b -14)

That the children once walked in 'darkness' was introduced at the beginning of verse 8. But now they walk in the light!

Guidelines for safe practice when orienteering would advise: not to walk on an unfamiliar, potentially dangerous path in the dark. When dusk descends, pitch camp and await the 'morning light'. That path might look acceptable in daylight but never at night. Unconverted people walk their life in an unsafe way because they are permanently 'in the dark'. Spiritual darkness! In the dark about who God is; about the need for and the only method of, salvation – spiritually blind. They are walking in the darkness (verse 8a) **as you once were**. The unconverted cannot see what the right way to go is. So they stumble on. Yet the children who follow the Father do not so stumble because they are the light. It is illogical that they, being the light, can follow paths that are clearly seen to be fatally dangerous. The 'children of light' can no longer walk the world's path that

they once trod in darkness.

(Verse 9) ⁹ *for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true, ...*
Good, right and true. Perhaps we could take the first letter of 'good', the first two of 'right' and the first of 'true'? We get **Grit**. Another name for 'perseverance'. An outcome of the fruit of being children of light. Which is further commended in verse 10, where the children are to seek to discern what is pleasing to the Father, who is Himself the source of all Goodness, Righteousness and Truth. It takes Grit to persevere in this way.

(Verse 11) The children are to have nothing to do with other worldly paths, in fact they should recognise and expose⁴ such paths for the sin they lead to.

The way to expose folly is to let light shine on the proposed path. The light of morning would expose a dangerous precipice. (verses 12 & 13)
Christians as they walk their path, bring disgrace to sin by living a life of light. Only light dispels darkness. Only light shows up a dangerous path.

Don't rant against sin, but display a life lived in and of the light. The best way to dispel darkness is not to curse it but to light a candle. Live a life of light which will show up the folly of taking any other path except God's. One holy life at the workplace will do more than all reproof, that is not matched by a holy life. While most comes from one holy life matched to winsome words.

Are you puzzled by verse 14? It is derived from Isaiah 60:1, where it foreshadows the 'light' of Christ's salvation. But it is modified. It forms an early church hymn used at Baptism. Already in use when Paul was writing. At Baptism we are 'signed' and 'sealed' as having died (are sleepers) with Christ and then have risen in newness of life with and in His Resurrection (arising from the dead). Henceforth the light of Christ is on us and shines from us. In this way Paul is reminding the relatively new Christians at Ephesus – for whom their baptism was a recent experience – that his letter is not breaking new ground. They have been Christ's light from the beginning of their Christian Life.

At the beginning of Christian Life it is clear that this life is about dying to sin and walking in newness of life. A life that is lived in that light.

So far then we have: Walk in Love and Walk in Light.

3. Walk in Wisdom (Verses 15-20)

Think carefully about how you walk. Think and plan ahead. Be not taken unawares. We now have Apostolic advice on how not to go down the path that the unconverted do.

(Verse 16) ¹⁶ *making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*

4 Earlier translations used instead of 'expose', 'reprove'. In such a case it would have been necessary to caution the Christian walker not to adopt a holier than thou attitude through a self righteous reproof. In the light of the more generous, recent translation, we might recognise the motive that would apply should we find a person about to unconsciously follow a notoriously dangerous mountain path that would certainly be fatal. In love we would seek to dissuade them by taking this action by exposing that danger to them. But not to berate them for their folly as 'reprove' might infer.

Idleness leads people into sin. The devil finds work for idle hands. Unplanned time can invite temptations. You came home from some activity not having a plan or purpose for when you would get there. Perhaps you expected to just 'see what happens'. This sounds very like 'pagan talk'. Could this expose you to unnecessary risk?

Make positive use of all opportunities by planning for them. Thinking ahead: that is, considering where to 'put your next step' in your wise walking.

(Verse 17) To avoid being foolish in your use of time, make an effort to find what is God's will for you to do. Prayerful attention to His revelation in Scripture, would be a good start.

(Verse 18) Anything that causes us to lose control and 'blows our mind' is covered by the example here. Some might say, "That doesn't apply to me because I only drink beer to excess!" Such a response misses the point. Anything that causes us to not be in charge of our thoughts and actions is condemned as being the way that the 'world' walks.

But, slipped in, as it were, at the end of that verse is Paul's principal advice for Walking with wisdom: *but be filled with the Spirit.*

In the New Testament, we find several times the Holy Spirit sovereignly taking over saints in a special way for a special purpose of that time. But that is not the way 'the Spirit' is applied here. The command to be filled is a:

- plural command – that is for all Christians;
- passive command – that is something that is to happen **to** you;
- present command – that is it is to happen to you continually.

So Paul is effectively saying, "Go on letting yourself be filled with the Spirit." The four participles (qualifying the verb, 'filling') that follow are telling you that when you're 'filled with the Spirit' 4 things will happen to you:

- Verse 19: You will be **speaking praise** among your brothers (the fellowship) with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs – breaches of fellowship can be caused by one person not being filled with the Spirit.
- Verse 19: Singing, **making melody** in your heart, to the Lord. God will be great in your mind and you'll be full of praise to Him – all spiritual coldness is from not being filled with the Spirit.
- Verse 20: Always **giving thanks** for everything, unto God the Father, in the Name of Jesus Christ – all moaning is caused by not being filled with the Spirit.
- **Submitting yourself** to one another out of reverence for Christ. Considering all others to be better than yourself – all feelings of being a 'cut above another' are due to not being filled with the Spirit.

To sum up: If you want to know how to live the Christian Life. Be filled with the Spirit.

How?

Paul refers in this passage to 'filled with the Spirit' in verse 18, as an immediate alternative to being drunk with wine. So we note the lesson. How do you become debauched by wine? By drinking, drinking, drinking and then drinking some more, until it takes control!

The lesson: How are we filled with the Spirit? Go to the Spirit Giver, drink, drink, drink and drink some more until the element which the Spirit Giver gives, **takes control!**

Jesus said: (John 7:37-39) *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"* ³⁹ *Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

Being filled with the Spirit is a matter of constantly drinking – feeding on – Christ. Prayer; study of the Word; Christian fellowship; the 'breaking of bread'; spiritual exercises; devotional life; communal devotional life – together as a fellowship; spiritual priorities – walking with Christ. When that happens you find fellowship, worship, thankfulness, mutual submission, holiness.

We have a marvellous picture of what a Christian should be like in this chapter.

- Trying to please God, that's why the last phrase is *out of reverence for Christ*⁵.
- Living for the fellowship, that's why the last verse begins *submitting to one another*.
- Obviously different from others. *They're drunk with wine and we're filled with the Spirit*.

With all this spiritual life fed by the Spirit Giver.

Our Christian lives are far from what they should be. We'll only walk better when we walk closer with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2194]

May it please God that all present, through Jesus Christ, shall have life through His Name.

5 NKJV has 'God', but with the footnote 'Christ'.

Christian Living in the Home

partly based on: S Olyott

(Review of last week)

Before we begin with the specifics of this passage, it will be useful to reflect on an incidental observation made during our recent Bible Study on Paul's, shortest letter, to Philemon.

This letter was mainly a personal appeal to a 'well to do' slave owner, who was also one of Paul's converts to Christianity. A slave, Onesimus, also a Paul convert, had run away from his owner in Colosse and having fled to Rome, by God's providence for the elect, had come into contact with Paul in a Roman Jail (or in house arrest) and become a sincere Christian. Making himself almost indispensable to Paul in his imprisonment.

Paul would have liked to have retained the ministrations of Onesimus, whom he describes as like a son to him, but recognised that Philemon's claim on his slave should be honoured.

Onesimus was sent back with this letter. In which Paul very gently but persistently (by some eighteen arguments) pleads for reinstatement and forgiveness of the slave to Philemon's **family household**.

While a personal letter, about a personal situation, the letter was also addressed to a local congregation and hence, by its providential preservation: also to us today! We are to take to heart the lesson of responsibility and the manner in which Paul demonstrates Christian brotherly love.

However we also observe the following:

Paul nowhere criticises the institution of slavery as practised in the Roman Empire of the time. But upholds its conditions.

Many since then (especially in the 'Marxist Camp') have criticised Paul for this and used it as a reason to reject Christianity.

But, Paul's teaching, and Christianity in general, led to the eventual abolition of slavery in that Empire and later in the British.

The lesson is this: Since the 'fall', sinful humanity is subject to the righteous wrath of God, for its disobedience of the Creator's right to obedience of His creatures. The once perfect creation of 'man' has been defiled by him and with this the 'world'. Worldly institutions and practices have as a consequence developed, that are far from God's plan for mankind.

Paul does not suggest a 'Marxist' style 'revolution' to correct social injustice – such as slavery. All injustice is of man's doing and in his 'fallen' state is inevitable! Nothing the 'world' can do will restore God's perfect creation. At best only one corruption will be replaced by another – possibly worse!

Paul did not suggest a revolutionary overthrow of slavery! But he did model a Christian family unit in which those with the role of slave were treated as Christian brothers. Eventually as Christianity spread through that Empire, it became impossible for the institution of slavery to continue. A true Christian is a changed person. Who lives differently from the 'world'. Nothing will change the world by its own resolve. But the world will be moderated by the 'salt' of the Christian lives within it. Often this will result in laws constraining the 'natural' sins of the many. [Aside: We should fear for our children, the current trend for these laws to be systematically removed from our present society!]

Relate to Family life.

Our principal theme for Chapter 5 has been, that a Christian lives differently than others. Must and (with the power of the Spirit within) does live differently.

Verses 1-16. Christians together, in the maintained unity of the Spirit, which is Christ's 'body' – the local church – behave differently from the unconverted, when they are together.

Verses 17-21. Christians behave differently from the rest, when out in the world.

Verses 22 of Chapter 5 to verse 9 of Chapter 6: We now come to be instructed by Paul, in God's Name, about living the Christian life in the hardest place of all! In the home.

Compared to this it is relatively easy to live as a Christian in Church, somewhat harder at work, or school, or in the community – tomorrow and the rest of the week. But the hardest is at home. So Paul comes to it last.

Christian Living in the Home.

We will extract from this long passage, only four of the most important things to be said. The purpose being to equip us to be able to know and live the Christian life according to the great principles of God.

1. First and foremost, the Christian life (for we Christians) must be lived in the home.

There may at first be a house. But by the coming together of a Christian man and a Christian woman, such a building can become a 'home'. The house becomes a home through the wife. So Paul recognises this significant role of the wife, by speaking to the wives first.

Verses 5:22-24. If the Christian home is to be the sort of home God wants to see, wives have to be the sort of wives He wants to see.

Then for there to be a wife there needs to be a husband. So Paul's next instruction is to husbands.

Verses 5: 25-33. You will see he has more to say to husbands! If the Christian home is to be the sort of home God wants to see, husbands have to be the sort of husbands He wants to see.

Often the Christian home is graced with children.

Verses 6:1-3. Paul has words for children also. In fact children would have been in the meeting as Paul's letter was read. Therefore we are encouraged to have children in our Services including during the Sermon. Even at a young age they sense the significance and progressively begin to catch some of the meaning. [At the other end of the age scale I remember services I took each month at an aged care hostel. In the front row was a sincere Christian lady of 101 years. She could hear nothing. She sang the hymns with gusto – at a different time to everyone else. We would all be finished and she would continue with the last two or three words. One of the non-Christian carers, who came to wheel her away, got a question to her, "Do you understand ...?" "No," she replied, "but I feel the atmosphere."]

Back to the Children. If the Christian home is to be the sort of home God wants to see, children have to be the sort of children He wants to see.

Where there are children there are to be parents.

Verse 6:4. So the husband now also becomes a father. So Paul has words for fathers. Here you might ask, "Why Paul's pattern doesn't also pass on words for mothers as well?"

God is head of Christ; Christ is head of the man; and man (as we shall see) is head of the wife. There is properly only one absolute authority in the home: – it is the husband/father.

At God's judgement seat it will be the father who is held accountable for the integrity of family life!

The mother of course does have authority over the children, but it is not absolute – it is delegated authority from the father, for the circumstances where the father is not there. Then she acts in his stead. So logically when Paul is talking about children it is the father who is 'in the firing line'.

In current practice this is the limit of a family, but in the first Century, actually as part of the family, there were often, slaves.

Verse 6:5. Here Paul addresses slaves. Many of the slaves of those early years were some of the finest Christians. Onesimus is the subject of Paul's letter to Philemon as mentioned in today's introduction. Church tradition holds that he became a senior figure in that early church.

All members of a Christian family have to be the sort of person God wants to see, if that family is to be a family God wants to see.

But it is not easy! So often the criticism: 'a saint abroad but a devil at home' can be justified. In the main areas of Christian life there should not be inconsistency. Church; world; and home. But the hardest to be consistent in, is the home. There we are best known; most misunderstood; and most available to criticism. Yet here is the test of each of us. But also of the Gospel. If the Gospel is not

capable of transforming a life to be consistent with what God wants to see in a Christian family, then it would not be able to transform anyone in any situation. But it can and does!

When the Christian life is not demonstrated in the home it brings shame. Shame on the Gospel. That great Missionary of over 100 years ago, C T Studd, ever confident of the power of the Gospel to transform lives said, "The light that shines farthest, shines brightest nearest home." [Not only a great statement of Christian confidence but also a fine example of multiple superlatives for young students of English grammar to observe.]

So with great urgency we restate the first point: **The Christian life has to be lived in the home!**

2. Not everyone at home has the same role.

Paul lists each separately, with no overlap except for a little at verse 33b.

As can be noted, wives have certain privileges, which none of the others have and children also have their unique privileges, but Paul is not talking about privileges, rather about responsibilities and duties for each.

The ideal attitude of the Christian in the home is this: When you put your key in the door, or the child joins the family fresh from a restful night's sleep, the thought must not be, "What can I get out of family life." But rather, "What is expected of me in this Christian home!" This represents a striking difference with the typical non-Christian situation. But there should be such a difference! We're new people and have to live in a different way.

These expectations that Paul provides, the specific responsibilities and duties, for a wife are not the same as for the husband and so on. Yet there are easily and clearly defined rules. But a major problem in following them occurs when each focuses on the other's performance rather than their own. (Isn't this always the sin that lurks in us all? *Matthew 7:3* ³ *Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?*) Instead of: "Am I the father God wants me to be?" This is perverted to "My children are far from what God wants them to be!"

So beware and remember this.

Shortly in part three we will begin working through the passage more closely. This is what is prone to happen in our sinful hearts:

When I am preaching about the wives. All the wives won't want to listen, but will instead look forward to it soon being his turn! And also when preaching about the wives, the husbands may be thinking, "Mm she doesn't shape up very well. I'll have a talk to her when we get home."

This is the exact opposite of Paul's intention.

Family breakdown occurs when we criticise everyone else for their failures from God's prescription and ignore our own!

3. The role of each person in the Christian family is clearly defined!
Here we will identify, as an aid to memory, a key word or phrase for each.

Verses 22-24. These verses send shudders of disdain through the strident followers of current worldly 'movements'. Yet we must be different. We are changed from the attitudes and restrictions of the world!

²² *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. Do so voluntarily.*

²⁴ *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.* This means that the wife puts herself completely at the disposal of her husband. Her judgement, intellect, gifts. She in effect says, "All for you." Can what we read at verse 24, mean anything other than God's role for the wife? Her key word is 'submit'.

Verses 25-33. The husband's key word is 'love'. There are three words in the Greek which can be translated as love. One is pure lust – self gratification, the next is friendship (felicity) this is appropriate but not enough, the ultimate meaning is that self sacrificing love that Christ exhibits for His Church (agape). That is the word used here. A love which seeks only the welfare of the other – whatever the cost.

The wife puts everything to the man, who will do anything and everything for her benefit. Wouldn't that ideal be utopia?

Tomorrow morning when the alarm goes off (perhaps far too early) the opening thought of the wife towards her husband is 'submit'. His opening thought, even before hers, is 'love'. That is how the day is to start and end in a Christian home.

[2149]

May it please God that all present, through Jesus Christ, shall have life through His Name.

Christian Living in the Home – Pt 2

based on: S Olyott

(Review of last week)

We began Paul's, God given instruction of the absolute necessity of living the Christian life in the home, last week. This is acknowledged to be the hardest place in which to show the changed nature that a true Christian has been given by the Holy Spirit. The passage is long and has many points that can be made. In fact it could suffer from 'missing the forest for the trees'. That the mass of detail will obscure the main principles from God that are necessary for us to accept. Only four main points are being put in our study of this passage.

1. First and foremost was the principle that as true Christians, we each must live the Christian life in the home.

A solitary Christian may live in a house. But a God ordained couple may begin their life together in a house making it a home. By there now being in a house, a wife, it becomes a home. So Paul recognising the significant contribution of the wife, first applies the principle of God for the home to the wife.

If the Christian home is to be the sort of home God wants to see, wives have to be the sort of wives He wants to see.

For there to be a wife there must be a husband, so this is Paul's next subject. If the Christian home is to be the sort of home God wants to see, husbands have to be the sort of husbands He wants to see.

By God's grace a God ordained married couple may in due course have a child or children. When this letter from Paul reached the individual local churches the children would have been present to hear it read. Just like it is proper for them to be in our Services.

If the Christian home is to be the sort of home God wants to see, children have to be the sort of children He wants to see.

The presence of children in a local congregation and the Christian home implies that there are those with the role of parent.

If the Christian home is to be the sort of home God wants to see, parents have to be the sort of parents He wants to see.

And so on for slaves and the consequent masters that existed, in those times, in a Christian household.

2. Not everyone at home has the same role.

But each must possess the same attitudes. Not one of, "What can I get out of family life?" But rather, "What is expected of me in this Christian home?"

The expectations that Paul describes, the specific responsibilities and duties, for a wife are not the same as for the husband and so on. But they are easily and clearly defined for each. The problem arises when each focuses on each other's

performance of these rather than on their own. Instead of: “Am I the father God wants me to be?” This becomes perverted to “My children are far from what God wants them to be.”

Family breakdown occurs when we criticise everyone else for their failures from God’s prescription and ignore our own.

3. The role of each person is clearly defined. As a memory aid we identify a key word or phrase for each member of a Christian family.
For the wife it was ‘submit’ as the Church is to submit to Christ. The husband’s is ‘love’ with that self sacrificing love that Christ has for His Church

And so we continue on from last week: Verse 6:1 Children: Their key word is ‘obey’. In the original context the ‘children’ could be at the age of majority – 18/21. In the Bible context of that time they had the role of child until they were married. Perhaps at the older age the word could be modified to ‘honour’ as usually found in the Ten Commandments.

Verse 6:4. The caution to fathers is not to provoke their children to anger. Instead they should be brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Where this can be taken to mean that everything that happens, and is said, in the home encourages the children towards Christ. So we find the key word for father’s (with their children) is ‘encouragement’.

Verses 6:5-8. Slaves were to demonstrate consistent, good natured ‘obedience’. With the motive that “Christ is my master and I’ll treat my earthly master as I would Christ.”

Verse 6:9. The head of the household when there are slaves is the master. Being ‘over’ somebody defines you as a master, but you must recognise at the same time that you are under Christ. Hence the key word to those who are masters is ‘answer-ability’. Just as your servants are answerable to you, you nevertheless are answerable to your master in heaven.

How sweet and well ordered is the Christian home where all these key words are recognised and applied. On the other hand when any member forgets their key word this harmony is spoilt.

4. Important reasons are given for the need of all these instructions.

Verses 5:22-24. Wives: Why should she submit? In the prime instance, because it pleases the Lord.

And, it is in accord with the divine pattern of the relationship of the Church to Christ, when applied to the Christian family. As a practical outcome (which is consistent with God’s expectation for all his saving graces – that God’s glory is displayed to the heathen, Ezekiel 36:36) it provides a visual picture of the relationship of the Church to Christ. Solid, convincing spiritual reasons.

Verses 5:25 to the end. Husbands. It is only in that sacrificial loving and caring

for the spiritual and physical well-being of the wife by the husband is that visual picture, mentioned above, able to be formed and preserved.

Beside you are not two individuals any more, you're one! The way you treat your wife is in effect the way you treat yourself. Love her as yourself. She is not separate from you. God has made you one. Just as the Church and Christ are one.

Once again we see that the perfect Christian family of husband and wife, provides a telling visual picture of Christ and His Church. People should be able to come into Christian homes and recognise the divine nature of the relationship between believers and their Christ in the wider context, that is being modelled by husband and wife in their family.

Verse 6:1 Children. Why should children obey? ^{6:1}*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* Olyott makes the observation that he used to think (when he was a child) that this instruction meant that children are to obey their parents, but only when the parents are right. But he later realised that this was incorrect. Children are to obey unconditionally. The 'this is right' is applied to the obeying. Nevertheless the obedience of children as with the submitting of the wife is coupled to the father refraining from provoking, but rather encouraging, his children, and the Husband loving his wife as himself.

The next two verses, indicate that God blesses the obedience to obey and honour. Obedient children are happy children. They simply obey, while the parents carry the responsibility for the decisions made. I recall a series of examples from my time as Superintendent of Schools Computing. My immediate subordinate was the manager of the Computing Centre which provided computer processing for educational use in all the Metropolitan High Schools. Each morning I would speak to him from my Office in East Perth, by phone, to plan the day's activities. He would advise the needs and problems. After some discussion, where he would offer the bulk of the suggestions, I would take the responsibility to decide what was to be done. He would be the one to do it. And he was able to do so without any recriminations, or hesitation, because the responsibility was mine.

Even teenagers, who are obedient to their parents have freedom!

When 'John' is told to come in at a certain time and he does. Even if he is told to come in at a time that he considers unreasonable, yet he still does. He develops the trust in him of his parents and finds that he receives more and more 'freedom'. The benefit of obeying rather than 'kicking against' the requirements.

We all need to mature (grow up) in body, mind and spiritually. But part of God's requirement for us to develop in spiritual maturity is obedience to and in cooperation with the means He provides (prayer, the Word and the Sacraments). Obedient young people are strong. Jesus showed this in His obedient life.

A strong character develops through obedience, whereas a weak character stems from disobedience.

I once was in charge of a Science Department of a large High School. A mature man who had come from India was my laboratory technician. I was about 30 at the time. It turned out that he had been retrenched from the Indian navy when that country purged non-fully-indigenous persons from high positions. He had been an admiral! I asked him how he could happily take instructions from a 'kid like me'. His reply was that no one could be a leader – especially in the services – who hadn't learnt to accept authority.

In the Bible the Centurion is a similar example: ⁸ *But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed."* ⁹ *For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go', and he goes, and to another, 'Come', and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this', and he does it."* (Matthew 8:8,9)

Christ Himself knew obedience. He became the 'captain' of our salvation by being obedient to His suffering. (Hebrews 10:2 KJV)

Verse 6:4. Parents.

Fathers. Colossians Chapter 3 is a parallel passage to Ephesians.

^{3:21} *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*

The valid actions of the father to the child should always be for their greater benefit. Not, as sometimes happens, where the convenience of the parent is the purpose.

However the greatest reason for the care by fathers is this: God has instituted this world in such a way that the greatest single influence on a child's life is the parents. And if a father does his job properly, no one can do it as well as he must.

Mum and dad are commissioned by God to form the character of their children. This is the highest 'calling' that parents can attain for their children.

Yet parenthood is practically despised (or at least dismissed as optional) in the modern (1977) world!

Servants and Masters. Christ is the real master of the servant, while the master is under Christ.

Over these two weeks we have followed the 4 important points contained in our reading.

- The Christian life MUST be lived not only in church and in the world, but IN THE HOME.
- Each person in the home has a different role. None has the same role.
- The role of each person is clearly defined.
- Strong reasons are given for why it should be this way.

When God set up the world He established institutions for the good order of society. Family; State; Church.

The family unit was set up first! God is jealous of the family life. It is holy and sanctified. The Bible has a lot to say about the family. Disgrace is brought on the Gospel if Christians live badly in the family.

Imagine the encouragement parents receive when their children reach an age of discernment and choose to confirm their baptism by formally joining the local church, having shown by the evidence of their Christian life in the family that they are indeed God's elect and 'born again'.

If progress in spiritual development is not made in a Christian home – where can it be?

It's the hardest place: defences are down – no time off (at work you can leave it behind, no escape in the home) – family members see us as we really are. The devil attacks like nowhere else. It is the place of our worst failures and most unwise words. It's where we must work the hardest in our Christian life.

Therefore, it's no mistake that with such difficulties, that the Apostle goes straight from this to Spiritual Warfare. Next week!

[2086]

May it please God that all present, through Jesus Christ, shall have life through His Name.