

Living as God's Glory

Wk 5 (11/9) Handout – Ephesians 4:17-5:20 “Unity in the Church”

Summary

In Chapter 1, Paul celebrates the glory of God who set aside for himself a people to declare his glory and called them to be holy. He forgave their sins, adopted them as sons and daughters, and indwelt them with power. These set aside people form the church, Christ's body, who continue the flesh and blood revelation of God to all humanity and to the universe. They are empowered by his Spirit and seated beside Christ in heaven while they live out their mortal lives on earth. In a sense, you can say that God's people are like Christ who is fully human and fully divine. We are fully human while also fully sons and daughters of God.

The glorious work of God bringing about reconciliation and adoption also means that the “barriers” separating Jews and Gentiles was destroyed creating one united people, a new humanity. Paul is a messenger and herald of this “second creation of man” message bringing the news to Jews and Gentiles alike. It is a message of unity, power and reconciliation lived out in a body where gifts of grace are the only distinctions. At the close of chapter 3, Paul prays that the Ephesians will “grasp” the vastness of God's plan, his work, and his goals....and realize the vast power available to them helping them to “grow up” and become mature in Christ.

(4:17-5:20) Unity in the Church

This long section begins with a review of the theological themes discussed in chapters 1-3 but quickly connects those themes to specific body-life behaviors and attitudes. As a collection, this section describes elements of a distinctively Christian world-view. Most of the discussion concerns the relationships between people in the body rather than business ethics, judicial process or health concerns that might be found in the law. The specific “moral rules” provide a set of illustrations that contrast the “old-self” / “new-self” transformation. The entire section follows this contrasting comparison of before/after, old/new, futile/nature. An interesting feature of this section is that it focuses on imitating God rather than Christ.

Discussion

In 4:17, Paul says “you must no longer live as the Gentiles do...” In what way is he using the term Gentiles here? How does it compare to the usage in 2:11; 3:3?

The description in 4:17-19 depicts the big picture causes of moral decay. How does this depiction compare / contrast with Romans 1: 18-31?

In 4:24, Paul uses the term, “created.” In what ways is Christianity related to the idea of “creation”? Reread Eph 2: 11-18; 2 Cor 5. How do these descriptions compare to the one here?

4:24 & 5:1 call on Christians to imitate God. How is imitating God different than imitating Christ? What is challenging, confusing, intimidating, ... about the idea of imitating God?

(over)

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Using the "old-self / new-self" pattern, complete the following chart using the references provided.

Reference	Old Self Thinking Instead of....	New Self Thinking Pursue....
4:25-27	Lying & Anger	
4:28	Stealing / not-working	
4:29-30	Unwholesome talk	
4:31-32	Bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, malice	
5:3-4	Sexual talk, sexual innuendo, impurity, biting sarcasm, off-color jokes, foolish talk	
5:15-17	Unwise uses of time	
5:18-20	Getting drunk on wine	

- What is the connection between unwholesome talk and grieving the Holy Spirit in 4:29-30?

PM Discussion

This section of Ephesians deals with replacing old ways of thinking with new attitudes leading that lead to new behaviors. Most of this section concerns how our behaviors, attitudes and talk effect one-another. It is interesting that the replacement for bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, malice, foolish talk, sexual humor, obscenity, biting sarcasm, and drunken revelry is simple "thanksgiving." It makes me ponder how these other behaviors and attitudes stem from a lack of thanksgiving. I also wonder why "thanksgiving" language is so rare in our conversations.