

TITLE: Household of God: The New Life (Cont') – Ephesians 5:1-14

AIM: Consider the new life in Christ, beginning to look like Christ.

INTRO: Children are natural imitators. That can be a positive thing or a negative. Years ago, a very powerful TV ad which promoted stopping smoking had a man & little son sitting together on the bank of a lake/stream. Every move the man made the little boy imitated. Finally, it showed the man taking a cigarette out of the packet & putting it in his mouth & lighting it. The ad ended w/the little boy picking up the packet of cigarettes. If you don't want your child doing it, maybe you shouldn't either. On the other hand, parents are to be good examples to their children, expecting that their children will pick up good habits as they imitate us. Living the Christian life really boils down to our imitating God in ways we can – adopting His attitudes & actions, such as forgiveness (4:32). The wonderful thing is, we won't find any bad examples w/God, only good, perfect. If we follow the example set before us by God, we'll do what is right in every situation & will point others to Him. That is Paul's message in a nutshell in Eph.4 & 5.

Theme: HofG – understanding that we are, seeking to understand what it means to be. I would submit to you that members of God's household imitate their Father & elder brother (Jesus). We rightly understand that they are one in essence – God the Father & God the Son. In our text today, Paul continued his description of & admonition to live out the new life in Christ, giving more examples of the old life that is to be put off & the new way of thinking that should be learned. Eph.5:1-14 [READ]. Now again, let's follow Paul's line of thought. He had written about what God has done for us in Christ, who we are in Christ, called us to walk worthy of our calling to be God's children & members of His household, urged us to maintain unity & grow up into Christ, our head. Then he admonished us, if we are going to walk worthy & grow up, to put off the old self, learn to think new, & put on

the new self. Then he describes how that might look, chap 4 ending w/the admonition to forgive as God forgave us. Then, in chap5, Paul makes a very broad statement before again getting specific. He argues from what he has already stated in several ways, reminding the Eph believers & us that, in Christ, we are children of God – beloved, dearly loved children. Strong's points out that the word children (teknon) refers to “that intimate & reciprocal relationship formed between parents & children.” We don't understand that relationship/bond until we have children; then we are immediately & deeply bonded. Thru faith in Christ we become God's children & so enjoy that intimate relationship w/God Himself. I John 3:1 – **“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God...”** As children of God, we should seek to be like our Father, which, of course, calls for drastic change in our lives. The apostle Peter quoted Lev.11:44 when he wrote (I Pet.1:15-16) **“...as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”** Impossible? Yes, in our own power, but as Christ lives in us, as the Holy Spirit indwells us, we can live new, holy lives. Knowing Him thru faith, seeking Him – that is, continually desiring the closeness of His presence, His favor, His pleasure, recognizing & walking in His presence, following His lead, enjoying Him is the key. Then Paul wrote, **“And walk in love, as Christ loved us...”** If we call God our Father, then there is a very real sense in which Christ Jesus is our elder brother. Well, our elder brother conducted His life on earth motivated by love, 1st for His Father & also for us. He proved His love by giving Himself over to the power of death, paying for our sins on the cross. His sacrifice of Himself in obedience to the Father & on our behalf was a sweet smelling offering to God. As Strong's puts it, to God it is “the odor of acquiescence, satisfaction.” Paul is saying, “Imitate your elder brother; love as He loved.” Jesus said that also – John 13:34 – **“A new**

commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” When we act like our Lord Jesus & conduct our lives in love, we too are sweet smelling to God our Father. But something that is very imp to understand is this: if we are going to imitate anyone, we have to know them well. Comedians who imitate political figures, etc., spend a good deal of time studying their mannerisms & ways of speech. Good impressionists make you immediately think of the person they are impersonating. If we are going to imitate God, we have to know Him well, spend time w/Him, commune w/Him, grow in the knowledge of Him. That’s part of what Paul had prayed for in Eph.1 & 3. Intimacy w/God is the key to the Christian life – our gaze set on Him, knowing His love & loving Him – that’s what transforms our lives. We can’t stay the same if we are abiding in Christ, staying close w/God our Father. But if we are to know & experience God more & live the new life we’ve been given, there are some things that have to go, that are incompatible w/the new life because they are incompatible w/God. Paul said that sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, crude joking should not even be named among us. Sexual immorality is the Grk “porneia,” which is a general term for any illicit sexual activity, such as pre-marital sex, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, bestiality – really any sexual activity outside the Biblical boundaries set by God – w/in marriage between man/woman. Impurity is moral or physical or mental uncleanness, lustful living, being driven by the illicit desire for what is not rightfully yours. Covetousness is the “greedy desire to have more,” not being satisfied w/what have been given. It’s really idolatry, because it’s setting up what you desire as more imp than God, at least for the moment. Paul said, “That’s not proper for the believer.” Filthiness is obscenity – base thinking/living. Foolish talk comes from a foolish mind. Crude jesting is turning everything into a dirty joke.

Again, Paul is clear: “That’s out of place, not fitting for the follower of Christ. That’s the very type of thinking/living that incurs God’s wrath. There’s no inheritance in God’s eternal kingdom for those who live that way.” That’s not to say that if we have ever been guilty of such things there is no hope for us, as we’ll see in a few minutes. Christ died for all sin, including sexual sin, & the blood of Jesus covers our sin & cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Hallelujah! But it strikes me as very significant & no coincidence that Paul wrote about putting away sexual sin immediately after he exhorted us to imitate God the Father & Son. Why did Paul do so, & what does God want us to understand? 1st of all, Ephesus was the center of the worship of the goddess Diana, & cult prostitution was a common part of that worship. At least some of the Ephesian believers came out of that very background, & Paul was rightfully calling them away from it. That part wouldn’t apply to us, would it? But, 2ndly, sexual immorality, w/all the trappings of impurity, covetousness, filthiness, crudeness, is false intimacy. Those so involved are looking for fulfillment, intimacy, connectedness. G.K. Chesterson wrote, “Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God.” Knowing God, intimacy, communion, oneness w/God is what we were made for & is the central need of our lives. It is also, as said, the key to transformation, living the new life. The only thing that comes close to that & which is designed to point us to God, is intimacy/ oneness in marriage. It is the gift of God to be enjoyed – His pleasure, for which we should be thankful. I think that’s what Paul is referring to in vs4 – “instead [of filthiness, foolish talk, crude joking], let there be thanksgiving” [for what we can rightfully enjoy as God’s gift]. If we pursue false intimacy, thinking that it can fulfill the desires of our hearts, we are mistaken & taken away/kept from the true intimacy which we need & which will transform our lives. 3rdly, sexual immorality defiles the body, which, if we are Christians are temples of

the Holy Spirit. Paul made that very clear in I Cor.6:13b-20 – ***“The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, & the Lord for the body... Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ & make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined w/a prostitute becomes one body w/her? For, as it is written, ‘The 2 will become one flesh.’ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit w/Him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit w/in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought w/a price. So glorify God in your body.”*** So, Paul wrote, “Don’t associate w/those who live this way, don’t partake w/others in such ‘unfruitful works of darkness.’ You were, at one time, darkness, but that’s not who you are anymore.” Remember that Paul wrote (2), “you were dead in your sins; you used to follow the course of this world, the prince of the power of the air; you used to live in the passions of your flesh, but God has made you alive in Christ & you have new life. Live new!” In I Cor.6:11, Paul wrote these beautiful words after warning that those who are in their sin will not inherit the kingdom of God: ***“And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ & by the Spirit of our God.”*** You were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. The light of the gospel, the light of Christ, who is the light of the world, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God has shone upon us, & we’ve been brought from darkness to light. Now we are light in the Lord. So, Paul said, “Walk as children of light.” Live new! “Bear the fruit of light,” which he said “is found in all that is good & right & true.” Reminds me of Phil.4:8, where Paul wrote, ***“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable,***

whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Right thinking leads to right living. And we are to expose the darkness by being light – vs11-14a. I don’t think God means for us to go around pointing fingers & saying, “this is wrong, that is wrong,” etc. I think we’re simply to be lights – Jesus said, “You are the light of the world” (Mt.5:14). The light of Christ in our lives, the light of our new lives will naturally expose the darkness in others, which may stir up anger in some, but for others it will point them to Christ, helping them see their need of a Savior & recognize the provision of a Savior in Jesus. But we can’t point anyone to Jesus if we ourselves are practicing the very deeds of darkness they practice, if we are not living new. Paul may have been quoting a song of his day when he wrote, “Awake, O sleeper, & rise from the dead, & Christ will shine on you.” It’s time for the church, the household of God, you/I to wake up & rise up out of dead works, the old self, learn to think new, put on the new self. It’s time for us to imitate our Father & our Savior. It’s time for us to reflect the light of the Son, Jesus Christ. “Rise up, o men of God! Have done w/lesser things. Give heart & soul & mind & strength to serve the King of kings.” Christ will shine on & thru those who are awake to Him, whose gaze is on Him, who seek to know Him more, & commune w/Him, who seek to be like Him. Intimacy w/God, oneness w/Him is the distinct privilege of the believer, & it is the power & key to changed/transformed lives. But if we would know Him & be changed by Him, we must, by His help, turn from that which is false, that which defiles & seek Him. We are the Household of God!