

Ephesians – The One Body of Christ

“Awake, O Sleeper”

Ephesians 5:1-21

We are in Ephesians 5:1-21. The apostle Paul writes,

Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness, nor foolish talk, nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is a sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous, that is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them. For at one time you were darkness, but now you are a light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part and unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them, for it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, awake of sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Look carefully, then, and how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time for the day's arrival. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is, and do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Amen.

Please be seated.

Well, I do want to thank you for your prayers. For my father, seems to be recovering well after surgery last night. I did want to tell you something. And to be honest, before he even had this accident, I thought this was going to be my opening, to the sermon.

I wanted to tell you something about my father that a lot of people don't know. And I'm not exactly sure how to say this, but my father was a G.I. Joe. Okay. I know it's a weird thing to say. My father was a G.I. Joe. I have evidence. If you look at this, this is. Now. I know this is prior to

the GI Joes that a lot of guys my age were collecting. This is an earlier version of G.I. Joe. If you look up there, you have the Navy Drum and Bugle corps and the guy on the right. Okay, in the front. That's my dad. Okay. My dad's a guy. He's an action sailor. I have proof right there, and I. I don't know how much the folks doing GI Joe back in those days understood about, midshipmen, but they actually aren't action sailors. They're midshipmen. They're still in school. But for whatever reason, you have some guys in there dressed blues and says, here's an action sailor, G.I. Joe. I remember this box sitting on a bookshelf in my house when I was growing up, and I remember looking at this thing and thinking, that's about the coolest thing I've ever seen. So you wouldn't be surprised to know that between the ages four and six of my life are, my family, my sister and I would often beg my dad to go pull out of his closet that sword and come out and do the sword drills in front of us so that we can watch him. Sometimes he'd put on his uniform. Sometimes he'd still be wearing his uniform from work that day, and he'd get up there and he'd do the sword drills in front of us in the living room. You also won't be surprised to know that between the ages of about four and six, I would often go root around in our backyard looking for sticks that resembled that sword. This is something, I think, by the way, this might be a universal male experience --the idea of rooting around for good sticks to be used for various ends, like looking like a gun or looking like a sword or something. I still to this day, will sometimes see a stick and go like, that's a good bazooka right there.

Just think about these things. But I would get a sword and I would make my mom sit on the couch, and sometimes my sister would get roped into this. My brother wasn't born yet, and I would stand in front of them and I would act out those sword drills. Now, I had no idea what I was doing. I didn't understand what he was saying anyways, when he was saying about face and present arms, because of the way they kind of spit the words out when they're doing that. So I would stand there and I would just make up words, and my mom would have to watch me do this, and she would. She was a sweet mom. She would do that. Why? Why am I imitating him like this? Right? It's because he was my dad. And I thought this was the coolest thing on earth. And I wanted to be just like him, right? And that's what imitation is.

In those cases, imitation is a mix of affection, admiration, and aspiration. Right? It's affection. You love the person. Okay. But you might love your children, you know, imitate your children, right? Because there's also admiration, right? I give thanks, and I and I admire who you are and what you do. And then lastly, there's always this hint of aspiration, right? I wanted to be like this. How cool would that be? You see, this is the kind of imitation that Paul is talking about at the opening of our passage here in chapter five. He says, remember, he's talking about all the way back to chapter four. Walk in a manner that is worthy of your calling. What does that mean? Imitate God.

He says here in chapter five, Imitate God. What? As beloved children right now imitating God to become beloved children, you're imitating God because you are beloved children. You have seen him. You've seen his glory. And it's about the coolest thing you've ever seen. Paul turns his attention in imitating God now into continuing this metaphor of walking. Sermon Just imitate God as beloved children. What does that mean? That is, walk in love. Okay, that's the way you could translate that there. Imitate God as beloved children. You, because you're beloved. Therefore walk in love. Now what is this idea of walking? You know, walking is a metaphor that's used throughout the Bible. It's one of the kind of primary metaphors for life.

Okay, if you think about it, there's only a handful of metaphors. One of them is walking, one of them is eating or drinking. What do we do? We eat and we drink of God's Word. We eat and we drink of his blessings. We take him in. Okay. And then the last one is the one of sleep, as with death, you know.

And then so-and-so went and slept with his fathers. He went the way of all flesh. And you can just see they're taking just regular experiences walking, eating and drinking, sleeping. And they're using these as metaphors for spiritual realities. And so even in the Old Testament, you hear people talk about, are you walking in the ways of the Lord?

Where are you walking in the ways of Baal? And this would be a very, you know, vivid picture for people who live in Israel's highlands, and the shuffle where they have to walk on trails to get from town to town and some trails are dangerous, and they take you to cliff edges and you could slip and you could die in some rocks.

Some passages take you through, canyons. They take you through valleys. Are you walking in the ways of the Lord, or are you walking in the paths of the bales? Okay, notice what Paul is saying here. He's saying imitate God was, I mean, walk in his ways. And we might say, how do I imitate God? I've read the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

I know where it says, what is God? God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable. Okay, I how do I imitate infinity, unchangeable and eternity? How do I do that? And of course, we say, you can't do that. Those are what theologians call the incommunicable attributes of God. That's not what Paul means when he says, Imitate God. I can't imitate eternity.

I'm bound by time. That's who I am as a creature. But think about the rest of that line. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. What in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Guess what? You can imitate those things. Those are the communicable attributes being disobeyed just by being here. You have being. If you're wondering about that okay power, you can have power.

How are you using your power into the glory of God? Wisdom. How are you thinking wisely about God so we can imitate God in those ways? And Paul is telling us, walk in the ways of God.

Now, just as a reminder, because we can't forget this. Remember, this is all a part of that original thing that Paul told us back in the beginning of chapter four.

That mandate to be walking in a manner that is worthy of your calling. And you remember when we talked about that? I said, this is what people call the effectual calling. This is where the spirit comes and gives you new life. So I just want to be clear about this. What we're talking about this morning is not how you gain new life.

This is how you live out new life. So if you're here as a nonbeliever, I just want to be clear with you. I'm not laying out the three fold path to salvation. I'm laying out the path of now that you've been saved, how are you to live? Now that you've been regenerate in the spirit. Now that you no longer live.

But Christ lives within you, now that there is a spiritual man living within you, so that you can put off the man of the flesh, you're no longer the old man. Remember how Paul talked about it? You're no longer old. You're now the new man in Christ. How then ought you walk? What paths ought you walk on? So if you're a nonbeliever, hear this.

Hear this as the goal, not as the way to get to the goal. However, if you are in Christ and you hear what we tell, we talk about these ways today and you feel like I'm not walking in those ways, then this passage is for you. This passage is for you to draw you into the ways of the Lord.

It's important that we keep that order in mind. Effectual calling comes first, new birth comes first. Being born again, regeneration that comes first, does are all the same thing. Out of that. Then comes the fruit of walking in the faith. We have a tendency as humans don't wait to flip that order around. I want to say go walk in these ways and then I'll know or then I'll get saved.

But that's not the order that Paul gives us. Rather be regenerate in Christ, be born again. Then this is how you walk, because our God loves us. As Hebrews 12 tells us, our God is a loving father. He doesn't leave us alone. He doesn't just forgive us for our sins and then kind of send us off into the world like, well, go figure everything else out.

He doesn't do that. Rather, like a loving father. He disciplines us. He raises us up. He teaches us, he shows us the ways. Notice also that as Paul is telling us, these ways to walk, he reminds us of how we used to walk. This is something Paul likes to do. Remember in chapter two of Ephesians already he said, you used to be dead in your trespasses, kind of a wash in the sea of trespasses just buried in it.

But now you've been brought out of that death into life. He also says, you used to be kind of tossed to and fro on the waves of your own selfish desires, but now you are rooted in Christ. You used to be, you know, the of the old world, the old man, where you had Israelite and you had Gentile, and you're just kind of alone and lost out there in the world.

But now you are new man, no longer Jew nor Gentile. Now you are a new man in Christ thing. Paul likes to bring out how it used to be, to give us a foil to understand how it is now. So notice what he looks at here. He says instead of walking in love, walking in light, and walking in wisdom, what is true of you?

What you used to be about, what sexual impurity, corrupt talk, shameful actions done in secret. That is hypocrisy, right? Drunkenness and intoxication. You see all of these things for Paul Marks, the old life says, don't walk those paths. Walk in the new paths, the paths of God in Christ. Look what he says in verse two, walk in love.

This is the first of the paths. Why? He says to walk in love, walk in light and walk in wisdom. The first one walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. I want to note this walking in love is marked by holy, self-giving. It's marked by holy self-giving, not profane. It's the opposite of holy, profane self accruing or self acquiring.

This is how Paul uses this language when he describes Jesus gift of himself. He doesn't just say love as Christ loved you, giving of himself, period. That's why he says, giving of himself as a sacrifice that is pleasing and fragrant to the Lord. And of course, we know that this is referring back to the Old Testament language that was used when people would give sacrifices in faith and repentance, because at the end of the day, you're saving the Old Testament the same way you're saved in the New.

You have to have faith as to be sincere worship. And so we know, for instance, which is the first place that we see this in Genesis eight, when Noah offers up a faithful sacrifice to the Lord, it says it was fragrant and pleasing to the Lord. And when you come to the tabernacle because of your sin in the Old Testament, and you offer, as an atoning sacrifice, or you participate in the Day of Atonement or any of the other sacrifices that get in other aspects of sin.

Like broken relationships, like an infection that needs to be purged, like a debt that needs to get paid. All of the sacrifices are hitting at different aspects of sin. When you go and do that, and that sacrifice is done before the Lord and repentance and faith, it is described as being pleasing and fragrant. You see, Jesus, unlike Noah, doesn't offer a sacrifice to God.

He is the sacrifice. He's the once and for all sacrifice so that it doesn't need to be repeated. It's not like the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament, but rather it's the thing that those animal sacrifices which were never powerful enough to forgive sin anyways. You can't kill animals for human sin. Sorry, doesn't work, but what does it do?

It points us forward to the sacrifice that would work, that would once and for all, make us clean and ceremonially pure to enter into the sanctuary of the Lord. Paul is saying, don't you know you don't have access to the Holy of Holies in Jesus? And the Old Testament, the people could

come into the camp, but not Gentiles, and the priests could go into the tabernacle, but not into the Holy of Holies.

Only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies. But now that we've received the full sacrifice of Christ, we now have access to the Heavenly Throne Room. That's why the curtains torn in half on the event of his death. Because we now have access to it. We are made clean. We are made pure, as pure as a high priest, because we are in Christ, the once and for all high Priest.

And Paul says, if you are been made pure, then don't go live in impure ways. You notice that how he describes sexual immorality and corruption as impurity don't blow past that thinking. Oh, he just means bad, okay? He doesn't. When you see Paul talk about impure actions and impure ideologies and impure thoughts, okay, he's using holiness language or like in this case, lack of holiness language to describe the spiritual realities that those holiness laws of the Old Testament were always pointing towards.

It was never really about whether or not you had different fabrics sewn into one fabric. It was never really about whether or not you ate certain animals or other animals. It was always pointing us forward to the appropriateness and inappropriateness, the holiness and the profanity of certain activities and thoughts. And Paul is clear about this don't go act like an impure sacrifice when you've been given the true sacrifice.

Don't go act like a Gentile when you've been given the status of High priest in Christ. Rather, walk in the love that is marked by self-giving, like Christ our Lord, not self acquiring love. It's interesting how it connects holiness to this idea of love. Now notice he also gives us a contrast to this love. He gives us a kind of foil and we might not be surprised by but no notice.

He says, go walk in the way of love that is self-giving, not self accruing. Don't instead go do sexual impurities or sexual immorality. Know, for Paul, the contrast of love. The opposite of love is sexual immorality. And it's an interesting question why does he why does he bring sexual immorality in here? You might think he'd bring in something like hate, okay, or just general selfishness.

And I don't think he's ruling those out, but he's drawing our attention to this particular aspect of the sin of sexual impurity. What is he saying? Saying there's something unique and there is there's something unique about sexual immorality, sexual disobedience. I think it's this. It's that sexual sin is really trying to accomplish something that love promises us. Self-giving Christian, Christlike love promises us a thing, but sexual immorality promises us the same thing, even though it can't deliver on that thing.

See, it's something we yearn for as bearers of the image of God. Your sexual sin promises us relationship. It promises us a sense of meaning. It promises us a sense of purpose. There's even

a sense of glory right? It promises us this kind of glory. And that is what Christ like love promises us. But sexual sin can't deliver in the way that godly, holy love can.

It offers us glory, but it can't follow through on its promise, offers us escape and ecstasy. And you know what ecstasy means? Ecstasy. Standing outside of oneself. It offers you this moment to get outside of yourself and behold, okay, that's what sexual sin offers you. And yet it can't deliver. As a matter of fact, not only can it not deliver, it ultimately leads you away from God, and it never satisfies.

If you've been coming to the evening sermons where we talk about Amos, you know that already the prophets of the Old Testament have pointed out that sexual sin is often connected to religious sin, if we might call it that. It's a false belief and false worship. As a matter of fact, Amos describes how in the northern Kingdom, not only are they offering the wrong kind of sacrifices to the wrong God in the wrong place, the northern kingdom, it then kind of switches over seamlessly to talk about how they're committing sexual sin there.

And that's not because Amos is trying to compound all the evil things that they've done. What he's doing is, is he's saying these are always related where you have sexual sin, you'll start to have false worship slighted. We have false worship. You'll start to have sexual sin slide in very quickly because there is something deeply religious about sex.

There's something deeply religious about it. It offers us, on one hand, in the God given design of a man and the woman the bounds of marriage. It offers us this wonderful picture of love and fellowship, even between Christ and His church. It's a beautiful thing. We'll talk about this more next week, because that's what Paul wants to talk about in chapter five.

And yet when it is messed with, when it is perverted, when it is kind of twisted and broken, it still makes the same offering. And yet it can't ultimately satisfy us. I think that's why we see with those who struggle with sexual sin, this increasing desire to amp up the extreme ness, to amp up the appearance of the behavior.

Because you have to add to the thrill, because it doesn't satisfy, it doesn't answer and fulfill its promises to you. It's a bottomless pit, always wanting more. But to live in a way that is fitting. Again, that notion of fitting this, that Paul uses, that it's appropriate for those who have been made high priests in Christ, right, have been given that holiness in Christ.

The appropriate way to respond is by walking in a self-giving love that's not looking to accrue escape and glory and purpose for yourself, but rather is giving it away in that manner that is perfectly embodied in the person of Jesus Christ says, walk in love, just like Jesus loved us. But notice he doesn't stop there. He then moves on, he says, and also walk in the light.

And we might be noticed by note. By the way, notice both of these things. Love and light are things that God is identified with. First of all, in first John we're told God is love, right? And of course, in John one, John traffics in this language quite a bit. In John one we are told this Jesus Christ is what he is.

The light. He is the light of the world who came and dwelled in the flesh with us. John loves these two terms. This idea of God being love you doesn't just love, he is love. God doesn't just shed light, he is light.

And so Paul tells us, walk in the light. What does that mean? Walking in the light means being marked by a fruitful integrity, not an unfruitful concealment, a fruitful integrity, not an unfruitful concealment. Now, to dig into this, we do have to get a grasp a little bit on what does it mean to be in the light? Okay.

What's a theology of light in the Bible? Here's just a quick theology of light. Gonna give you a quick survey of a theology of light. We don't have to go very far into the Bible before we run into light, do we? Genesis one God is making an earth that will be a place where we can thrive and live, right?

He's solving the problem of the two who've about who the formlessness and void. He's making a place where life can happen. We're not just can it happen, it can thrive. But what's the first thing we need to have a world where life can succeed and be abundant. The first thing we need let there be light. Without light, none of the rest follows.

Let there be light. But light just isn't needed for us to have life. Rather, light becomes kind of an a metaphor or analogy of the presence of God himself. Think about all those the he's in the Old Testament, whether it's the pillar of fire or it's the lightning on the top of Mount Sinai when Moses approaches it, this idea that when God is near the burning of the bush, right when God is near, okay, light is present.

It's a matter of fact, it's so bright and it has physical implications, okay? It's not just a spiritual, ephemeral light. It's a bright light. It has some kind of implication so that when Moses comes down from the mountain in Exodus 34, his face reflects the glory light of the Lord. And we don't know what that means. Does that mean that it kind of glowed?

And did that does that mean that that he was burnt, that his face was chafed like a mountain climber coming off of Everest, who has faces chafed and burnt because of the light that he was exposed to? We don't know. But whatever it is, notice how people respond to it. Do they see Moses coming to the camp and then say, oh man, I'm going to run.

I'm going to go hug on his neck. I want to get as close to that light as I can. Now what do they say? They say, where's. So does anybody have a bag? Because we need to put it over. Moses

face. Because they know something about that light, right? It doesn't just register the presence of the Lord. It registers the consuming presence of the Lord.

When you see the light of the Lord, your instant response isn't to go run and jump into it. Your answer response is to cover your face, to cover your body, to crouch down on the ground, and to beg for your life. Yeah, this is what we see in prophets. Even when they see angels who behold, who have this kind of reflected glory of the Lord, or the angels themselves, when they are in the presence of the Lord, cover themselves.

Right? You notice that they cover themselves because of his light. As a matter of fact, think about the ironic benediction that we will say at the end of the service today. Notice how it goes live. Listen to the logic of it. May the Lord bless you and keep you right. And then this is literally what it says. May the light of his face be upon you.

What? And he be gracious to you, because if he is not gracious to you, and the light of his face is upon you, it's not going to go well for you. It is a consuming light. So when Jesus comes, John and the other apostles. So tell us Jesus is the light. And that's why some people, when they see Jesus and they hear Jesus, they want nothing more than to get as far away from him as they can.

You should be reminded of this to we can be a gospel preaching church, and people will be turned away on Sunday morning. And that doesn't mean that we didn't preach the gospel. There will be some who see the light and they will scatter. We know that because in passages like John six, Jesus himself preaches the gospel. And guess what happens says everyone deserted him, even many of the disciples.

Okay, is that because Jesus didn't contextualize well enough? They said that because Jesus didn't have a very good message? No, Jesus is the light, and the light will inexplicably draw those who have been shown God's grace in an explicit, or maybe explicitly. It will push away those who are living in the darkness. But Paul tells us, don't be a person of the darkness.

Be a person of the light. What does that mean? That means that who you are in private matches who you are in public. You aren't walking around with this veneer outside of you that looks religious and faithful and good. And yet inside you are harboring the things of the dark. What do you use Moses language in Deuteronomy six when he says, love the Lord your God with all of your heart, right?

Your heart, your inner person. Love the Lord your God with yourself, with your body. Okay, put them on your hands. Put on your face. Love the Lord your God with your outward affect in the world. What is he saying? The whole part. All of you should be marked by a fruitfulness and an integrity because you are all one.

There is an organic, you know, continuity between your inner self and your outer self, and that organic continuity can be called the love of the Lord.

In other words, turn away from hypocrisy. Expose to the light the things of the darkness. Paul is asking you this what do you desperately want to hide? What is your besetting sin? And you know what it is because you're probably thinking about it right now. What is the thing that you would rather not have to even talk about?

You would rather die than have to talk about it. So a friend of mine who was a counselor told me, he said, I always know in the counseling room when we're getting close to the thing, when we're getting close to the secret thing, because they'd rather die than open that door. They'd rather die than talk about it. Paul's saying, if you are in Christ, then you have the tools for dealing with such shame.

You have the tools for dealing with such besetting sins. You want to go and find the appropriate person, maybe a spouse, maybe a friend, and maybe the shepherding elder of your community group, or maybe a pastor, or maybe a counselor. You want to go and you want to confess it, and you want to put light on the thing of darkness.

You want to invite the spirit in and say, blow through the windows and the doors and the rooms and the hallways of my inner self. Paul leans on another way of talking about this. He leans on the prophets here, particularly Isaiah in this next section where he quotes Isaiah and he says, okay, being in the light is like waking up out of the darkness of night.

Laying in your bed as a beam of light is shining upon you. Look at he says, oh, Waco sleeper, a Waco sleeper. The light of Christ is shining upon you, basking in. Don't be afraid of it. Don't run away from it. You're not a thing of the darkness. You're a thing of the light. You're children of the light.

So when you feel the light rays shining upon you. Awake. Receive them, relish them, bask in them. So Paul's told us. Walk in love. He's told us. Walk in light. And then finally he says, walk in wisdom. What does it mean to walk in wisdom? In verses 15 through 21? It means to walk in such a way that is marked by joyful service, not foolish intoxication, joyful service, not foolish intoxication.

Walking in love is contrasted with sexual impurity. Walking in light is contrasted with a concealed sin and hypocrisy, having the outer person not match the inner person. It's fascinating to me that for Paul, when he says walking in wisdom, notice he doesn't say exactly what we think he's going to say. Look what he says. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is, and I kind of expect them to stop.

They're like, okay, now you've addressed wisdom. But he goes on, he says, and do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the spirit. Isn't it interesting how Paul contrasts walking in wisdom, and you think the other thing is going to be being stupid? Okay, wisdom, folly, right? Insight, ignorance. But he doesn't say that.

He says wisdom, drunkenness.

You see, if you're walking in the light, if you are walking in the love of the self-giving Christ, who's the perfect image of the God of truth, then if you walk in wisdom, you are not going to be confusing your relationship with the world around you. You're not going to be obscuring it through intoxication, but rather you're going to be walking in sobriety filled instead with the joy of the spirit.

What is intoxication here? Paul, of course, is just using the word for drunkenness. But I think we are. We're right to recognize he's not just talking about alcohol. He's talking about any substance abuse. I would even argue that nowadays we know enough about the human, how the human brain works, that he might not even be talking about abuse of a substance like drugs or alcohol, but rather just the abuse.

The abuse of what we know happens when we seek to get endorphin highs. When you pursue, you know, likes on social media or the applause of the crowd or keeping up with the Joneses so that people can see that you're successful and they'll speak well of you out there in the world. All of that can be a form of drunkenness.

Why? How? Because it's a way in which we control when and where we experience euphoria, ecstasy, glory. What are you trying to do with addiction? You're trying to, in a godlike way, say, now I will hold on to glory. I won't deal with this suffering. I'm going to. I'm going to drown out the suffering, and I'm going to replace it with my own self-controlled sense of glory.

Sense of ecstasy, sense of having achieved a thing right? So that you don't actually live in the world that surrounds you, but rather you are living in a world that is obscured by your own desire to control, to manage, to manipulate. You see? Glory. Excuse me? Intoxication like sexual sin like even hypocrisy. It promises a thing that it cannot deliver on.

It can't give us what is promised. Rather, it leads to a spiral of addiction and increasing alienation and destruction, alienation from God and alienation from those around you. I notice what Paul says. Then he goes, okay, so don't be drunk with wine. But I'm not going to leave you there again. This is not a religion of deficit.

You know that about Christianity. It's not just don't do this and don't do that and don't do all the fun things in life. He's saying, don't do the things that fail, okay? Don't do the things that lead to destruction. Do the things that satisfy be filled with the spirit. That's where you're going to find

joy. That's where you're going to find a kind of wholeness of body in mind and of soul, even in suffering, because it's only through the spirit that you were knit together in the first place.

It's only through the spirit that that breathes into your lungs, the breath of life that you might live. And it's only through the spirit that you now have been re breathe the breath of God, so that you might be saved as he breathes into your heart, making you a new. It's only through the spirit that you'll find what is required, not only to thrive in this world that we live in, but to persist to the new heavens and new earth.

The thing that we're ultimately all trying to get to. Paul says, walk in wisdom by being filled in the spirit. Okay, okay, Paul, what does that look like? Give me some profile. This sounds kind of ephemeral. Walking in wisdom sounds kind of fleeting, abstract. Walk in wisdom and be filled with the spirit. What does that look like? Well, he gives us four things.

He says this. It means that you will have edification and fellowship, glorification and worship, gratitude in everything and submission to one another. Okay? Edification and fellowship. Glorification in worship, gratitude in everything and in submission to one another. Look what he says. Edification, fellowship. You will begin addressing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. There is something horizontal about the work of the spirit.

It binds us together as we encourage one another, gathering together like we do today, like we are this morning, singing together, encouraging one another, strengthening one another. Whether that happens Sunday morning or that happens in our small groups or in your congregational communities, we're called to edify one another. If we are walking in wisdom by the power of the spirit.

But it's not just horizontal. It's not just our inner human relationships. It's it's vertical, right? It's our relationship with God Himself. We're to glorify God and worship. What does it say? Singing songs and melodies. Singing songs and melodies unto the Lord? God has all that he wants. He doesn't have any lack. He doesn't require anything. But you know what he loves?

He loves it when we gather together and sing him songs.

It's a great thing. It's a mark of the walk of wisdom in the power of the spirit.

Thirdly, we have gratitude in everything. Now, I'd actually pointed this out. Notice it was horizontal. The first one's horizontal edification in fellowship. The second one is vertical glorification in worship. The third one is vertical gratitude in everything. Well, I because God has given you everything from that first breath and that yawn this morning to when you stretched in that kind of good feeling that comes from stretching, or even just having a body that works.

Isn't that amazing? Or drinking some coffee and getting that kind of that hit of the caffeine and then talking to someone you love and getting your kids together to come to worship all of those

things are what they are. All blessings of the Lord. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. This is an old doxology. It's an old sentiment of the church to recognize that even just breathing fresh air after the fall, that's a blessing of the Lord.

All blessings flow from him then to your life towards gratitude. Notice that's a vertical relationship. So we've got horizontal edification and fellowship, vertical worship, vertical gratitude. And notice we end with horizontal submitting to one another in Christ, recognizing that when we love each other and we live in the light, and we're brightly responding to the world around us because of God's wisdom, what does that mean?

We will be submitting to one another, seeking to disadvantage ourselves, not to accrue for ourselves, but rather to accrue for the other. And let me just be clear, that doesn't mean becoming a doormat. That doesn't mean becoming an enabler of someone's sin or their wickedness or injustice. That's not what that means. We have a great model. Once again, let us look to Christ.

Okay? People were always asking Christ for things. He doesn't always give them what they ask for. That's not what it means to submit. If you'd gone to the Pharisees and said, what would you like me to give you as one who is disadvantaging myself to the advantage of you? The Pharisees would have said, tell the people that we are the religious leaders.

They ought to be following. Okay, if you went to the Sadducees, they would say, tell the people that we are the center of the temple cult in Jerusalem, and that everyone needs to be worshiping in the temple. If he'd gone to the zealots and said, what should I do? They would say, you need to overthrow this governance. You need to lead a revolution against the Roman Empire.

Notice in no and no. One of those cases does God? Does Jesus give them what they ask for? Rather like with the lame man in Mark two, he does not give them what they ask for. He gives them what they need. It was that felt need of being lame that brought that man before the Lord in the first place.

But notice the Lord doesn't come up to him. Jesus doesn't approach him and Mark two and say, be healed. He does not do that. What does he do? He walks up to him and he says, your sins are forgiven. Because Jesus knows what he needs, not what he wants. Now he does give him what he wants in order to show him that he has the power to give him what he needs.

But remember what Jesus says there, which is harder to say your sins be forgiven, or stand up and walk, because Jesus alone is the only one in that room and will be the only one for a long time who will realize which one is actually harder to say. Jesus alone knows what must happen for that man to receive forgiveness for his sins.

It's a whole lot harder than saying stand up and walk. You see, submitting to one another, having the mind of Christ, as Paul tells us in Philippians, to disadvantaging ourselves to the advantage of others is the mark of walking in wisdom, of walking in the spirit, or, as Paul tells us, as imitating God. When I was four years old, rooting around in the backyard of my house in Monterey, California, looking for a good sword looking stick so that I could force my mom to sit down and watch me go through the U.S. Naval Academy.

A drum and bugle rotation. I wasn't doing that to earn some kind of status. I wasn't doing it so I could finally, you know, win the status of son. It wasn't hard labor that I felt forced to do so that I might get their affection. I knew I was accepted, I knew that I was loved, I knew that I was a son, and that's why I wanted to do it.

So Paul calls us to imitate God, not because that's some kind of law that can condemn us, but rather, as he says, as beloved children, you've already got the status. The father loves you, he accepts you, and he's the coolest thing you've ever seen. So imitate him. Awake, O sleeper, to the morning, awake to the light of Christ.

Let's pray. Heavenly father, we do lift up these considerations. Dear Lord, these teachings of Paul can cut us to the quick. They can make us uncomfortable. They can make us ashamed. They can make us feel how much we are lacking. And yet, Lord, I pray that even if we feel those things, we would also feel a great, great hope. Because all of our failure happens in the context of the overwhelming and overflowing grace of Jesus Christ. Dear Lord, as we consider these things about our own lives, let us be drawn to him. Let us hear the voice of the Shepherd, even for those who are here who have never said that they walk in the ways of Christ. I pray, Lord, that they would be drawn to that path, that they might find life in Christ's name.

Amen.