

Jason Upchurch - Ephesians 5:1-2 - Just Love

Well we are continuing though through our section here in Ephesians on putting off sin, renewing our mind, and putting on good works.

When God saved us, he saved us to a life of good works.

Ephesians 2:10: We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

God saved us to do the good works he prepared us to do.

Romans 1:5: says the apostles received grace to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.

God wants his people all over the world to be obedient as a result of saving faith. We're not saved by obedience, but our salvation leads to obedience.

Titus 3:8: the apostle Paul says to Titus: this is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to insist on these things - insist - so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

The gospel requires that leaders insist on good works among the church. And not just some good works, beloved. A devotion to good works. We can't be apathetic to good works, can't get around to good works every once in a while. Even pagans do good works once in a while. Not to earn righteousness or bring glory to God, but even a broken clock is right twice a day.

No, we are to insist on lives devoted to good works. Nonstop good works.

Which means we need to put off sinful works of unrighteousness, renew our minds with truths, and put on good works. Or Paul says here in several times "walk in them."

These truths are also basic to Christianity. This is Christianity 101 of how we get sin out of our lives and live in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord.

This morning we continue in our section of putting off, renewing our minds and putting on. If you've ever watched news coverage of a hurricane you know that if you're right in the path of a hurricane there's the initial blast, then there's the eye of the hurricane which is actually rather pleasant, then there's more high winds and hard stuff

Well, we're sort of in the eye of the hurricane here. We've seen several sins that Paul specially tells us to put off - lying, ungodliness, stealing. We've seen that we are to get these out of our lives, the truths we can use to do that, and then specifically actions to take to walk as Jesus would have us to walk. I know these have been challenging and convicting. But I trust they also have been laced with grace and encouragement to strive to please the Lord in all areas of our lives. That was sort of the first wave.

This morning we're sort of in the eye of the hurricane where it's pleasant: we're going to see we're called to love like God loves - that's verses 1-2. But then next week we'll begin in **Vss. 3** and following we plunge right back into the thick of it where we are called to put off more sins.

1) Put on Love. Read 5:1-2

As we're thinking through the Christian life and things we should be doing and things we should not be doing, sometimes it's just helpful to step back and ask: what's the big picture here?

What's the big picture for Christians as we live our lives - as we walk - in this world? It's not primarily a list of things we don't do or a list of things we do.

For Christians our lives revolve around looking to who Jesus is and what he's done for us in securing our salvation. All that Jesus did for us can be summed up in one word: love.

And as a result of Jesus loving us, we in turn go and love. Or put another way: all the commands we are called to obey or sins we are called to put off are just some aspect of love.

Really, when boil down the Christian life the whole thing comes down to love. Love God and love neighbor. That's really the whole thing.

Jesus says that the whole law hangs on those two commands. Every command we are given, or every prohibition we are given falls under either loving God or loving others.

So if you're in a situation where you don't know what to do, just act in love. If you think about the sins we've seen so far, if we were just loving people we wouldn't lie to them. If we were loving people we wouldn't steal or refuse to forgive. If we loved people vile things wouldn't come out of our mouths. I think we can all agree on that.

But sometimes we're living life and we're in a situation and there are choices to be made and there's no clear commandment one way or another. And so have to make a judgement call. What do we do? The big answer is that we are simply to love. Notice how everything in the first two verses revolve around that theme. **Read 1**

Big Picture: When you don't know what to do, love.

1) From a loving family.

First of all, we need to remember that we are beloved children. If you are in Christ you are loved by God. If you have kids, just imagine the greatness of your love for them. And understand that our love even for our own children pales in comparison with God's love for us.

Jesus says in **Matt 6:** if you who are evil know how to give your children good things, how much more your Heavenly Father.

Parents know how to love our children. We know how to bless them, correct them, train them. But the reality is that we are sinful. So even at our best our love for our own children is imperfect.

But God is perfectly holy and perfectly loving and loves his children with an infinitely holy love. In fact, it's so great that Jesus says the Father loves us the exact same amount he loves his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 17:23 Jesus prays that the world may know that the Father loves us just as he loved the Son.

What God is trying to manifest to the world is his love for his people is as great as his love for Christ. That's a pretty big deal. I think sometimes in our battle against sin we forget that we are beloved children. We beat ourselves up and feel the weight of guilt and shame. And if we're in sin those are actually good things to feel.

Guilt and shame are like the little check engine lights that come on in our cars. We don't like to see them because it means something is wrong. Your conscience either excuses you or accuses you when you do things. You know that twinge of angst you feel when you do something wrong? God designed that for us. It's a good feature.

Usually when my check engine light comes on in the car I groan because I know it's going to cost me a bunch of money. It's going to be hard to fix. But why did the car manufacturer's put the check engine light in there? It was to help us out. To keep something really bad from happening. That's how it is in the Christian life.

Here's what happens in the Christian life: That guilt and shame should lead to 2 things. First, repentance. When that twinge of guilt or shame hits examine why it's there and turn from that thing you're doing. Ask forgiveness, make it right as best you can and stop.

But secondly, it should lead to praise. It should lead to praise because God has already covered all our sins in love. Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe.

God wants us to walk around knowing that we are loved, knowing that he has chosen us and blessed us and forgiven us and loved us.

So we're from a loving family.

2) The Family Imitates the father. God wants us to imitate what he does. He wants us to imitate the love he showed toward us to other people. **Read 1-2**

So we imitate God by walking in love just like Jesus. The word "imitate" in Greek is where we get our word "mimic" - we act like he acts.

That's what children do: they act like their parents. Dad, the things you do and the things you say and the way you behave is exactly the kind of things that your children will do. They pick up on those things instinctively. What you say, how you treat your wife and the people around you, your work ethic, your prayer life, your generosity, everything.

Moms, same thing. How you conduct yourself will automatically be uploaded to your child's life.

And for the most part kids aren't actively trying to learn these things. They just learn them. And that is true in the spiritual world as well.

Here we are to act like God in love.

How did Jesus love? He loved sacrificially. He gave himself up for us. **Turn to 1 John 4:7-12**

This connection between being loved by God and loving other people is really made all over the Bible. If you're loved by God, then you will love other people. Those who are truly born again, truly believers, can't help but to love. And we see that here in **1 John. Read 7-12**

The connection is the same, isn't it? If you've been born of God you love. That's what we do. That's the backstop of all our actions and behavior.

John goes on here and in some ways repeats himself but adds some elements. Love includes obedience and it includes confessing Jesus as the Son of God. **Read 13-21**

So as Christians we don't live a life fearing God in the sense that he will condemn us to hell. He won't condemn us to hell because he's saved us in love. But now we go and love our brothers.

That's what Paul is getting at **back in Eph. 5**. Walk in love just like Jesus. That's specifically how we imitate God. We imitate God by walking in love. When you walk in love what you're doing is living a life of love. Love is exuding from you at every turn.

So we are from a loving family, we imitate the Father.

3) Love is sacrificial. Paul doesn't give us just a vague notion of what love is. It's not just a feeling or feel good lyrics. He actually pinpoints the height of love: the sacrifice of Jesus. That's the phrase "gave himself up for us." We are beloved children and we are to love like Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

That's the point of the gospel, isn't? Jesus gave himself for us. He traded places with us. We call this substitutionary atonement.

A substitute is when you put something in place for another. If you're cooking and you run out of an ingredient, you can often substitute another ingredient in its place and the recipe still works.

If you're building a home you can often substitute building materials for other materials.

Well, in salvation Jesus is our substitute. We deserved the wrath of God in hell forever. We deserved to be punished for our sins. But he took our place when he suffered for us on the cross. As he was dying he was taking the full weight of the wrath of God that every believer has deserved.

Somehow on the cross Jesus was bearing the full weight of the wrath of God that all Christians deserve for all eternity.

Turn to Isa. 52:13-53:3. This is Isaiah's prophecy of Jesus's death. Throughout the Christmas season we've seen the prophecies of his conception and birth. But we also need to be reminded that his life and death were promised as well. Here, I know most of us are familiar with this passage. But just notice all the times the Messiah - Isaiah calls him the servant - is to suffer as a substitute. He suffers for others.

Now I want to read a few verses before because this sets up what Jesus will do. He's going to sprinkle nations. In the OT when you sprinkled something with blood that's how it was cleansed. **Read 52:13-53:3**

So this is what the Servant, Messiah, will do. Through being marred, beat up and whipped and beaten - which Jesus was. Through being marred he will sprinkle nations. He'll do this as an unassuming person. Jesus the man was not the one anyone pegged to be Messiah. That's why people were like "You mean the carpenter's son?" This guy from nowheresville Nazareth? Yeah, him. Look what he'll do. Notice all the times his sacrifice is framed as a substitute. **Read 4-9**

This is amazing. The Servant Jesus, suffered all these things for us. He didn't suffer for his own sins, he didn't have any. He suffered for the sins of his people. And because of that he is given praise and honor.

Paul says he gave himself up for us. That's exactly what Isaiah is describing. The Servant is giving himself up for us, specifically for our sins, iniquities. **Read 10-12**

What's he saying? He's saying that by Jesus's sacrifice he sees his offspring. Jesus didn't have any physical kids. He was never married. So how does he see his offspring? He makes them through his sacrifice.

When we come to faith in Jesus we are cleansed and become the children of God. Look at this gem in **Vs. 11**
Read

You know how we talk about double imputation all the time? Through faith in Jesus our sins are accounted to Jesus and his righteousness is accounted to us? Or imputed to us? This is one of the clearest passages where that's taught in the OT. He makes us to be accounted as righteous.

God looks at our ledger and says, Yep - he's now righteous. Not just clean, but righteous.

And at the same time he bears our iniquities. Our sins are accounted to him. This was written 700 years before Jesus to describe exactly what Jesus would do.

He is a substitutionary sacrifice for us.

2 Cor. 5:21: God made him, who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus wasn't a sinner, but was treated like one so that through him we might be treated as righteous.

1 Pet. 3:18: For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for who? The unrighteous to bring us to God.

He did all of this in love. That's what motivated God to send his Son to die for us. **Look back at Eph 5.**

So the point Paul is making here is that just as Christ loved us through sacrifice, so we are to love one another through sacrifice. Sometimes, loving each other is really hard. Really hard. You don't want to, it's not easy, you have to give up things.

You guys with little babies you sacrificially love your children when you wake up in the middle of the night to change and feed them for months on end.

As your parents age and get older and you take care of them it's also a sacrifice. It takes hard work and effort.

Sometimes you have friends and neighbors who are very difficult to love, it requires discomfort to love them and help them. Maybe it's your spouse who is difficult to love.

What do we go back to? How do we keep going? We remember that Jesus did that for us. He sacrificed for us and he calls us to do the same in love.

So we are from a loving family, we imitate the Father. The love is sacrificial.

4) God is pleased when we love.

What is the result of Jesus sacrificing for us? You know sometimes when you substitute something it's a bad move. In the NFL right now it seems like half of the starting quarterback are out with some injury and so a substitute is playing for them. And it's bad. Really bad.

Sometimes you trade out an ingredient in your recipe and the whole thing falls apart.

What's the result of Jesus's sacrifice for us? And what's the result when we sacrifice? **Read 1-2**

The result is that it's really good. He says two things. He's a fragrant offering. This refers to the OT when the high priest would offer a sacrifice on the altar. Sometimes it incense, sometimes it was a bull. But whatever it was it would go up and please God. God was pleased by the offering. And often times it says that the Lord smelled the aroma and was pleased.

Does God have a nose? I thought he was a spirit? How can he smell? We call this an anthropomorphism. It's when God is described in human ways. No, he doesn't have a nose or ears or any kind of body. But when a sacrifice is made according to his law he is pleased.

Actually when we do good things it's called a fragrant aroma.

2 Cor. 2:15: we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

Think about your favorite smell. Maybe it's cinnamon rolls, coffee, pine tree, your wife's perfume, whatever. When we love sacrificially, our lives are a pleasing aroma to God.

That hard thing you have to do that you don't get credit for but you do it out of love, God sees it and it's like a pleasing aroma to him. It's good and right.

Because it smells like the ultimate aroma of Christ when he laid down his life for us. He was a fragrant offering. God was pleased with the work of Jesus when he died for us.

God enjoyed what that brought about. It brought about our salvation. It appeased his wrath toward us. It put his love on full display. And when we love it's the same kind of smell.

And it was a sacrifice. **Read 1-2**

That aroma cost God a lot. It cost him the human life of his Son. We know, of course, that Jesus rose again. But he still bore the full weight of the wrath of God. We'll never understand that. We'll fully comprehend what Jesus endured for us. Thank God.

But what we do know is it cost God to send his Son. It cost Jesus to condescend to us. But that's how we were redeemed.

1 Peter 1:18-19: says we weren't ransomed with cheap things like gold or silver. We were ransomed, purchased, with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we love we do the same thing: we are sacrifices to God.

Rom. 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Then Paul goes on to talk about how we are to love. Just like the love of Jesus laying down his life was a sacrifice, so too our living our lives according to love is a pleasing sacrifice to God.

Remember that when doubt and guilt and sorrow come your way, God has poured out his love on you. The God of love has set his sights on his people. We are now the objects of his love and we can love like he loved us.

Our sacrifices are pleasing to him, they bring him glory and honor and praise.

Pray