



TRANSFORMATIONAL FAITH (Eph 5:3-20)

(Noosa Anglican, 27/05/18)

INTRO: Does being a Christian make a tangible, noticeable difference to your life? Is your lifestyle noticeably different from the average person who does not profess to be a Christian?



This morning's passage, in Ephesians 5, is all about Transformational Faith. Faith that transforms the way we live. The Apostle Paul wants us to understand that if our faith does not change the way we live, it's not faith. It's just belief. This, of course, is also a central theme of the book of James, where we read,  *"Faith without works is dead"* (James 2:17). Jesus himself explained the same concept in John 14 when He said,  *"If you love me you will obey my commands"* (John 14:15). In fact, Jesus restates this crucial concept a further THREE times in that same discourse:



John 14:21 *"Anyone who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me"*



John 14:23 *"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching"*



John 14:24 *"Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching"*

In fact, so fundamental is this concept, so intrinsic is the link between faith and obedience, that Jesus cannot conceive of the possibility of someone loving Him and **not** obeying Him. It's simply not possible, according to Jesus. Either we love Jesus and we obey Him, or we don't love Jesus and we disobey Him. But it's simply not possible to love Him and disobey Him. If we continue to live in wilful disobedience to the commands of God, then whatever we think we have, it certainly isn't faith! It's just belief! Because true faith is transformative. True faith, saving faith, is faith that brings us to our knees in repentance, and submits our lives to the Lordship of Christ, where we say to Him, *"I will follow you now, and I will live life your way, from now on"*.

In this chapter - chapter 5 of Ephesians - Paul is going to give us some very specific examples of the way true faith should transform us. And as we go through these examples this morning, I'm asking you to evaluate your own life, and ask yourself, *"Is Jesus calling me to submit to him in any of these areas right now? Have any of these areas got out of control and need to be brought back under the Lordship of Christ?"*. The examples Paul gives us of transformative faith, can be summarised in 3 categories: 

1. Transformed Morality (vv.3-7)
2. Transformed Vision (vv.8-14)
3. Transformed Thinking (vv.15-20)



So, let's have a look at this first category – Transformed Morality

TRANSFORMED MORALITY (vv.3-7)



Let me briefly explain the moral climate of the 1st century. In the ancient Roman world, monogamous fidelity was a rare thing. Commentator, William Barclay,  quotes one ancient document which states, *“It is the expected thing that a man should have a mistress”*.

In the major cities of Rome, Corinth, Athens and Ephesus,  there were impressive temples to the various gods, each one staffed by hundreds of temple prostitutes, for the worship of that particular god. In Ephesus,  they worshipped the many breasted goddess Diana. The temple dedicated to her in Ephesus was one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. People travelled great distances to honour her by having sex with one of the sacred

prostitutes.  Cicero, the great orator, in a speech to the Roman senate in the middle of the first century, stated, *“Is there anyone who thinks that young men should be denied the love of courtesans? Such a view would be at variance with the license of what our age allows.”*

It is to Christians living in **that** world, who have recently been saved from **that** lifestyle, that Paul writes these words:



“³ Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. ⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.[a] ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them.”

Paul is saying to them, and to us, come out from the world, be different, be transformed. You cannot claim to follow Christ and continue to live in blatant disobedience to Him. And I want

you to take note of how strongly Paul words this.  In verse 5 he states that this kind of

immorality can cause you to forfeit your place in the Kingdom of God.  And in verse 6 he speaks of the coming wrath of God for those who fail to be transformed in this area of their lives, who fail to repent. Notice too, that it’s not just the **doing** of sexual immorality that is

forbidden,  but also **talking** about it and **joking** about it (verse 4). Smutty jokes and crude language are not consistent with a lifestyle that is seeking to follow Jesus and honour God.

 Let's press the PAUSE button. How are you going in this area of your life? Is God calling you right now, to turn from sin in any of these areas? To be transformed? Do you have a secret sexual life that is in blatant defiance of God's morality? Is the way you talk, unworthy of the Holy God you claim to serve? Then repent. Turn from it. In His strength, walk away, find in Christ forgiveness for your past and grace to start again. Make a renewed pledge, that from this day forward, you will honour Him.

TRANSFORMED VISION (vv.8-14)

The second category of transformation is transformed VISION, and it's very closely linked to the previous discussion of sexual immorality. I am not referring, here, to physical sight, but to what we are **focussed** on – to our spiritual eyesight. True faith will transform the focus of my heart. Listen to what Paul says:

 *"⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. ¹⁴ This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

God's Word is using the metaphor of light and darkness to juxtapose the huge difference between those who are followers of Jesus and those who are not. The unsaved are living in darkness. They are blind to God and blind to the eternal consequences of their actions, and so they live for the moment, stumbling from one pleasure to the next. They are living in darkness. But we who are in Christ have had our eyes opened. We perceive the truth about God, and the reality of life beyond the grave. And God now calls us to live this life focused on things of eternal value, rather than on things that are temporary and shallow.

I want you to notice the consistent sub-metaphor in the passage; a comparison between physical light and spiritual light:

-  **Verse 9:** Just as physical sunlight causes fruit to grow, so spiritual light should produce good fruit in us.
-  **Verse 10:** Just as physical light provides find our way through the physical environment, spiritual light enables us to find the right path for pleasing God

-  **Verse 11:** Just as physical light exposes defects in things that can't be discerned in the dark, so God's light, when it shines in us and through us, exposes sin for the evil that it is.
-  **Verse 13:** Just as physical light causes objects to reflect that light around them, so God's light not only shines **upon** us and **within** us but **through** us to others as well. I love the last part of verse 13: *"everything that is illuminated becomes a light"*.
-  **Verse 14:** Just the sun rising in the morning wakes us from our physical sleep, so the light of Christ and His glorious Gospel, can wake us from the slumber of our empty, purposeless lives, can raise us from the dead, and bring us to life – true life in Christ!

 Let's press the PAUSE button again. Is all of that a good description of you? Are you a light to those around you? Do you live in such a way that God's light shines through you? Are you noticeably different to those living in darkness? Or are you still living with one foot in the darkness? Do you still laugh at their crude jokes and join in with their dodgy behaviour and compromise your standards? God is calling you to come out of the darkness – COMPLETELY! Listen, again, to the exhortation of verse 14: *"Have NOTHING to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness"*. NOTHING! It's pretty clear isn't it? Not that we shouldn't be mixing with non-Christians, but we have to make sure that we don't compromise our standards, that we don't get drawn back into the darkness, and, by so doing, bring dishonour to God and to the cause of the Gospel.

TRANSFORMED THINKING (vv.15-20)

Finally, there's the 3rd area of transformation: Transformed thinking. In this last section the contrast is made between wisdom and foolishness:

 *"¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*

In other words, don't waste your life on things that don't matter or are positively evil. Life is too short. Take every opportunity to serve God and make a difference for eternity.

 *¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*

In other words, live your life in the knowledge that one day soon you will stand before the judge of the universe. Find His will now and follow it!



¹⁸ *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.*

Here is a classic example of foolishness. There's a reason we sometimes describe drunkenness as being "wasted", because that's precisely what it is. It's literally wasting your life! The binge drinking culture that permeates Australia today is literally destroying lives. It is utter foolishness.



Instead be filled with the Spirit ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The truly wise person is the one who comes to realise that we were made to know God and to worship and serve Him. That is the highest purpose of our lives. It is what we were created for. And when we realise that, and come back to the God who made us, and begin a relationship with Him, we discover the fulfilment and joy and purpose for our lives that all these other fruitless, foolish pursuits were trying to satisfy but never could.

CONCLUSION



This passage in Ephesians has a very simple message. You cannot claim to follow Christ and live an unchanged life. You cannot claim to be a Christian, and continue to live in blatant, wilful disobedience to Christ. This is not to say that we will ever be perfect. For we will live our entire lives at the foot of the cross, needing His forgiveness every day. It is by grace we are saved. But the faith that enables us to **receive** that grace is more than mere belief. It's transformational faith.

- It's a faith that turns away from immorality and the sins of the past
- It's a faith that turns from the world's darkness and lives in the light of Christ
- It's a faith that leaves behind the foolishness of the past and embraces the wisdom that comes from God – that sets our hearts and eyes on the things are above.
- It's a faith that transforms my life as I submit to the Lordship of Christ

May God guide and strengthen us all as we continue follow Christ.