

Presence Part 2- Lifestyle Implications of the Presence of God

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 25th August 2013

Intro

- Last time we looked at the issue of what was necessary to access the presence of God. We gave the extreme example of the lengths one man, Simeoen Stylites, went to, in order to get closer to God. We concluded that accessing the presence of God is the privilege that all Christians have, because of the gospel. Jesus has taken away the barriers to God's presence, and we enter in by faith in what He has done on our behalf. We, as the Church, are now the dwelling place of God by His Spirit.
- However, is that the end of the story? What about spiritual disciplines? Spiritual disciplines, such as bible study and prayer are important, and do indeed usher us into the presence of God- they provide the vehicle for God to speak to us and for us to meet with Him, but must never be seen as 'Brownie Points' which earn us the right to get into God's presence- we can only do that by the work of Jesus already completed on our behalf. We will look at the importance of spiritual disciplines in another session.
- This session we will return to the book of Ephesians and answer the question: What are the *lifestyle implications* of having free access to God's presence? Put another way, how should the fact that God dwells in us effect the way we live?

Read Eph 2:2, 13,19,22;4:1

We are to 'walk worthy' of our calling

- v2 says we formerly 'walked' in disobedience to God- this means we lived our lives without regard to God.
- V13 says that Jesus shed His blood and died for us so that we, who were far away from God, could be 'brought near' to Him.
- V19 says that we are no longer strangers and foreigners to God but family
- v22 says that we are now, together, the temple where He dwells!
- 4:1 says that because of what Jesus has done we should walk worthy of it- i.e. live our lives in a way that shows we appreciate and receive what He has done for us, rather than living or 'walking' as we used to, in disobedience. Paul uses the 'walk' metaphor for lifestyle in 4:1 'walk worthy', 4:17 'walk no longer as the rest of the Gentiles', 5:1 'walk in love', 5:8 'walk as children of light' and 5:15 'walk circumspectly'. We'll summarise what he says in three points and in so doing look at what it means to 'walk worthy' of our calling.

THREE WAYS WE ARE TO WALK WORTHY:

1. We are to love, unite with, and build up, the rest of the body (The Church)

- v2-4, v16
- In order to make it possible for everyone to attend church the following Sunday a Church planned a special 'no-excuse' Sunday. On the advertising was the following:
 1. Cots will be placed in the vestibule for those who say, "Sunday is my only day for sleeping in".
 2. Eye drops will be available for those whose eyes are tired from watching TV too late on Saturday night.
 3. We will have steel helmets for those who believe the roof will cave in if they show up for church services.
 4. Blankets will be furnished for those who complain that the church is too cold. Fans will be on hand for those who say the church is too hot.
 5. We will have hearing aids for the parishioners who say, "The pastor doesn't talk loud enough." There will be cotton for those who say, "The pastor talks too loud."
 6. Score cards will be available for those who wish to count the hypocrites.
 7. We guarantee that some relatives will be present for those who like to go visiting on Sunday.

8. There will be take-away dinners available for those who claim they can't go to church and cook dinner, too.
9. One section of the church will have some trees and grass for those who see God in nature, especially on the golf course.

10. The sanctuary will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies to create a familiar environment for those who have never seen church without them.

See you in church!

- We are not to be an island- we were created to be part of a body- the Church. We glorify God and walk worthy of His presence when we commit to His body- the Church.
- This means that we are not to remain aloof. God has not called us to an isolated lifestyle, but a connected lifestyle- we are called to belong to His family, this is what He died to accomplish, so why would we throw it back in His face?
- Solitude is important- Jesus regularly spent time alone with the Father, and so should we, however fellowship is also essential.
- Some go from Church to Church getting offended and causing offence and come to the conclusion 'I will just fellowship with my family or close friends'. This is not walking worthy of our calling- we need to commit to the wider body, not just those we particularly 'get on with' or share a common interest with. There is 'one body', this means, as much as it depends on us, we should be at peace with all of God's Church.
- Relationships in any family take working at, and the Church is no different. V3 says that we are to endeavour to 'keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace'- this means that we do our best to restore peace in our relationships within the Church. 2:14 says that Jesus Himself is our peace and He has not only reconciled us to Himself, He has also reconciled opposing groups to each other (Jews and Gentiles) through the cross. This peace, which the gospel brings into our lives, is a bond, a glue, which enables us to stay together in our relationships and weather the storms.
- If we know we are out of sorts with others let's remember how out of sorts we were with God and yet He took the initiative to restore our relationship with Him- let's do the same.
- V16 says that as we all do our share of work in the body of Christ using our individual gifts so the body grows and is built up. This means that we have a responsibility towards the Church to serve others using our gifts- they need us and what we bring and we also need them and the gifts they bring in order for us to reach maturity. The Church is not so much about 'self- development' but 'body- development' – interdependence, team. Is there a balance of giving ministry and receiving ministry in our lives? If not, what steps can we take to address this?

2. We walk worthy by imitating God, not the godless

- 4:17 & 5:1 encapsulates this next point of Paul's.
- 4:17 'no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk'
- 5:1 'Therefore be imitators of God as dear children'
- There is a video on You Tube with David Attenborough commentating, where he goes into a wood in Australia to film the Lyre bird. This bird has an incredible mimicking ability and as part of it's attraction of the female will copy up to 20 other bird songs of the forest, often fooling the other birds. In addition to this it also mimics other noises it hears, very authentically- car alarms, camera shutters, auto-wind cameras, gunshots and even tree felling complete with the noise of the chainsaw motor, sawing sound and falling tree.
- We all have a desire to imitate something, Paul urges us to imitate God rather than the godless lifestyles we see in the world.
- We need to be strong enough to influence others for good rather than them influencing us for bad. 1Corinthians 15:33 says, "Do not be misled: 'bad company corrupts good character.'" Jesus hung out with undesirables but He knew He was influencing them rather than the other way around. We need to be wise in our friendships, but also be a light to others. We must be honest about our temptations rather than flirting

with danger.

- The reason Paul gives for not walking as the other Gentiles is the 'futility of their mind' (v17), that they are following 'deceitful lusts' (v22). The lifestyle they live promises so much but delivers so little- it's futile- the lusts they run after promise to satisfy but in reality do not bring the long term satisfaction that holiness brings into our lives. God wants us to have abundant life- 'The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy, I have come that they may have life and life in abundance' John 10:10.
- Also Paul says we have been made new creatures, the old you has gone, therefore don't put the old 'you' on any more (verse 22)- it's not the real you, any more than an old set of flared trousers from the 60's.
- Paul lists 4 areas to particularly watch out for where we are not to walk in the old ways any more:
- **1. Telling lies (v25)** - The world is forever telling 'white lies' to cover things up, but we are to speak the truth in love (i.e. don't go about saying 'you're ugly'- that's not speaking the truth in love- love has tact and is gentle). Paul says that if we lie to a Christian we are lying to ourselves as we are members of the same body of Christ- v25.
- **2. Sinning when we get angry(v26)** - The world loses the plot when it gets angry and this quickly leads to sin. Choosing to sin when we are angry is giving a foothold to the devil. We are to be angry at certain things, but that anger is to lead to positive action rather than sin- we are to learn to control our anger and channel it correctly so that it is constructive rather than destructive. When you are angry you will make the best decision you will later regret so try not to be reactionary. Equally, we are also 'not to let the sun go down on our anger'- this means sorting issues out quickly, don't allow resentment to build up. Jesus advocates speaking to a person on their own first- tell them what they did in terms of their action and how it made you feel, rather than insulting their character i.e.- 'you're a liar etc.' Try and avoid terms like 'you always', be specific, nobody is always bad. Give them time to think about it and put it right. If you don't get joy bring along another (i.e. a leader) to arbitrate. If this still doesn't work it goes into the hands of the leaders of the Church to address it as a pastoral issue with that individual.
- **3. Stealing (v28)**- The world thinks nothing of 'borrowing' things from work. Everything gets justified as 'one of the perks of the job', but this is not to characterise our lives. This includes stealing work days to 'throw a sickie' after a night out or 'having a mental health day' as a sham. Even though 'everyone else is doing it' we are to be different. Paul advocates working and giving to the needy instead as the opposite of theft- if this is a stronghold for us this is the way to break it.
- **4. Speaking evil of others and building resentment to others (v29-32)** – We grieve the Holy Spirit when we do this- they have been made in God's image. Therefore we are to refrain from gossip. Imagine the person is in the room listening to your words- how would you feel. If you were the person how would you want to be treated- do to others as you would have them do to you. V32 says forgive as God forgave you- let this characterise your life rather than being someone who says 'that's IT now'.
- Who are your role-models? Who do you admire for their godly character? Paul says we are to imitate God, but elsewhere he encourages people to imitate his lifestyle as he follows God. It is right to have godly role-models, but ultimately our role-model should be Jesus- WWJD- what would Jesus do in this situation?

3. We walk worthy by a lifestyle of worship

- 5:2 'And walk in love, as Christ has also loved us and given Himself for us, an

- offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma'
- Paul here described Christ's sacrifice on our behalf as being like one of the Old Testament sacrifices of a burnt offering of worship to God which pleased God like a 'sweet smelling aroma'. This becomes our example for a life dedicated to the worship of God.
- This is our response of love to Jesus laying down His life for us- he gave His all for us, so therefore we give our all in return.
- Worship is a whole lifestyle it's not limited to singing songs. Jesus gave us the example by becoming a sacrifice to God. Worship involves sacrifice- Rom 12 says we should be living sacrifices- this is our reasonable worship. It costs to put God first in our lives, but love is willing to pay the cost, no matter how high.
- Our previous pastor, Tony, used to tell us of a story of a skiing trip where a boy was slipping off the edge of a snow covered cliff to certain death and the crowd gasped in horror, but helpless to do anything, aware that if they ran towards the edge they too would slip and go down off the edge. Suddenly a brave man raced out from the crowd, grabbed the boy and dug his heels into the snow, managing to pull the boy to safety. Who was the man? The boy's father. Love is willing to sacrifice.
- Worship in the Old Testament was all to do with purity. Things were cleansed, set apart for God. The people set themselves apart for God by abstaining from certain 'unclean' foods and only eating 'clean' ones. There is here in picture form our worship- our worship is living a life set-aside for God, remaining pure and abstaining from impure practices. This is no longer certain foods, but certain behaviours, which Paul lists- covetousness (wanting what other people have), filthiness, foolish talking, coarse jesting (we are not to be known for innuendos and filthy jokes, bad language etc.- this is not a lifestyle of a worshipper of God).
- V5- Paul brings out the reason we are to abstain from these things- it is idolatry- putting certain things before God- he also mentions fornication- sex outside of marriage- when we value anything above what God says we fail to keep it within boundaries and it takes over our lives. God created sex and partly for our enjoyment, but it is not to be idolised and is to be kept in godly boundaries as part of our worship to Him. The same with our use of money and anything else- alcohol in moderation is okay if it is not an addiction to us, but outside of moderation it becomes a snare.
- Paul warns that these behaviours characterise those who are perishing rather than those who are being saved, so we are not to follow them.
- Paul then brings a helpful teaching on what to do about them- v14 bring them into the light- confess them to Christ, tell a Christian about your struggle, get prayer, break the bondage, get accountability. Don't let it be a secret any more because Satan will continue to use it against you.
- The opposite to filthy speaking is to praise and thank God- v4. We are to be a thankful people, characterised by our ability to praise God always-v20. This is the lifestyle of a worshipper. V18 encourages us to replace drunkenness with being filled with God's Spirit and worshipping Him. V19 encourages us to be regularly singing our own songs of praise to God 'making melody in your heart'- are we habitually doing this?
- The last part of a lifestyle of worship is 'submitting to one another in the fear of God'- v21. This means that in our family relationships we are willing to show true humility and serve one another effectively, not because we necessarily feel like it, but because we consider being a better husband, wife, son or daughter etc. part of our duty of worship to God. Paul lists responsibilities for the wife to show respect for her husband's leadership by submitting to it (the husband must not negate his responsibilities in leadership too). The husband is responsible for showing love to his wife, making her feel loved and secure by him. The children are encouraged to obey to their parents and the fathers are encouraged not to provoke their children to

- wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.
- How are we doing in our relationships in the home? Are they glorifying to God? What is it like to be your husband/wife/son/daughter/parent?

- Archbishop William Temple (Archbishop of York & Canterbury 1920s-40s) on worship: Worship is...
 - submission of our nature to God.
 - awakening our consciousness by God's holiness.
 - nourishing our minds on God's truth.
 - purifying our imagination by God's beauty.
 - opening our hearts to God's love.
 - surrendering our wills to God's service.

Summary

We are to 'walk worthy' of our calling- 3 ways to walk worthy

- Love, unite with, and build up, the rest of the body (The Church)
- Imitate God, not the godless
- Live a lifestyle of worship

Song?

Ministry time