



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

A New Standard of Living: *Learning to Walk* (Eph 5:1-21)

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BIBLE STUDY

Ephesians

Location:

122 CAP

Time:

TUESDAYS @ 7:15 AM

EPHESIANS 5:1-21

“A New Standard of Living — Part III: Learning to Walk”

Introduction

Christians are commanded to “be imitators of God” (Eph 5:1). In verses 1-21, we are instructed with regard to how believers are to walk. (The walk of a person is their moral conduct.) “As beloved children,” we are to “walk in love” as a matter of first priority (5:2). Love should be characteristic of the believer’s actions, communication, and thought. God’s love is impartial toward His “beloved children” (*in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior*). The believer is to “walk in love” as demonstration of the heavenly Father’s nature, which was received by being “born again” (i.e. regenerated).

Christians are also commanded to “walk as children of Light.” There are six key words that characterize darkness. The first three are with regard to evil in the material and sexual realm. The second three are with regard to sins of the tongue. Those who practice such sins will not receive “an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (5:5), but will receive “the wrath of God” which “comes upon the sons of disobedience” (5:6). Christians are exhorted to walk in “the Light,” so they are not deceived by “the unfruitful deeds of darkness” (5:7-11). If a believer is walking as a child of “the Light,” three characteristics will be evident: “goodness and righteousness and truth” (5:9). Christians are responsible to avoid, discern, and expose “the unfruitful deeds of darkness” (5:11).

The third moral conduct of the Christian’s life is to “be careful how you walk, not as unwise but as wise” (5:15). Christians walk in wisdom through wise stewardship of time to understand what is the will of the Lord (5:17). The desire of God for His people is for them to “be filled with Spirit” (5:18). Some believers were becoming intoxicated with

alcohol in the same manner as they did prior to their salvation. Pagans believed that the god of wine (Rom. Bacchus, or Gk. Dionysus) indwelt the grape; therefore, drinking wine would infuse divine life. To “be filled with the Spirit” means that the Holy Spirit (the third Person of the Godhead) takes control or possession of the believer. Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit when He is allowed to control them. The filling of the Holy Spirit is a continual submission to God so that the believer may manifest Christlikeness in his/her life.

Christians are to continue trusting the Lord—who fills the believer with the Holy Spirit—to continue being filled with the Spirit. The filling of the Spirit necessitates confessing known sin to God. The church will never make an eternal impact for Jesus Christ in their own strength, but will demonstrate the power and manifold wisdom of God through the control and power of the Holy Spirit.

THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

(5:1-21) Verses 1-2 form a conclusion to what was said previously, and verse 3 introduces another disruptive element to the Christian’s walk. Children often imitate their earthly fathers; therefore, the “beloved children” of God should imitate their heavenly Father. The Greek word translated “imitators” is *mimētai* (μιμηταί), which is the basis for our English word “mimic” (“to copy closely or be imitative, especially in expression, gesture, and speech”).

To be an imitator of God (in the context of Eph 5) means to “walk in love.” Throughout the Old and New Testaments, love finds expression in a threefold manner: (1) God to humanity; (2) humanity to God; and, (3) humanity to one another. It is because God loves all humanity (Matt 5:45), especially those who are redeemed in Christ Jesus (John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 8:31-39), that the love of humanity toward God is the complete response of our entire being (Deut 6:5-9; Ps 18:1; 116:1; Mark 12:29-30).

The greatest impact of biblical love is upon obedience to all of God’s Word. In the Old Testament, love is inextricably related to covenant and obedience (Exod 20:6; Deut 7:6-8; 10:12; 11:13, 22; 19:9; 30:19-20; Josh 22:5; 1 Sam 18:1-3; etc.). In the New Testament, love is most frequently related to discipleship and obedience (John 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:9-10; 1 John 2:4-6; 5:1-3; 2 John 6a; etc.).

The standard of biblical love is doctrine. As a Christian virtue, love is more important than faith and hope (1 Cor

13:13), but it is not more important than doctrine and truth. Indeed, true Christian love cannot increase without an atmosphere of Christian truth. Love is not merely a sentiment; rather, it is a denial of self, which involves voluntary surrender of one's own interest for the glory of God. The Lord Jesus "gave Himself up" for believers; therefore, the Christian ought to *give oneself up* for Him. The surrender of self to God means to follow, obey, and live in relationship with the Lord and Savior. When we live with this attitude, it is "an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma" (Eph 5:2). Christ is the sacrifice for our sins; therefore, the saved are to become "a living and holy sacrifice" through obedience (Rom 12:1).

THE LORD JESUS "GAVE HIMSELF UP" FOR BELIEVERS; THEREFORE, [YOU] OUGHT TO *GIVE ONESELF UP* FOR HIM.

The opposite of imitating God is one who lives in "immorality or any impurity or greed" (Eph 5:3; cf. 4:19). When we are tempted to sin, we act as though God does not exist, or that we do not know Him. We will never be successful by sinning, whether the temptation is financial, interpersonal, or moral. Sin always feels good initially, but will always bring destruction into our lives, if we do not repent. "Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel" (Prov 20:17).

Verse 4 seems to be explanatory (epexegetical) of the command against "any impurity." Obscenity, foolish talk, and coarse joking are to be foreign to the speech patterns of Christians. By contrast, our speech is to be filled with thankfulness to God (Eph 5:4). The reason is that those whose lifestyles are characterized by immorality are not Christians (5:5). If a person's lifestyle is dominated by sin, so that it is the characteristic of his/her life, it is an indication that they have not been saved by God's grace. Christians can sometimes commit the same sins as the unsaved Gentiles, but when there is no conviction or desire to obey God, the warning of verse 5 needs to be received with seriousness.

The warning is extended into verse 6 from a different perspective: "let no one deceive you with empty words." There are some individuals who believe that merely because they made a profession of faith, yet their lives remained unchanged, that they are certainly saved without any regard for how they live. "There if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor 5:17). We learn by example (cf. Eph 4:20-24). The expression "like father, like son" is true for those who are God's "beloved children" and for the "sons of disobedience." Those who are partakers of the Light in the Lord, "walk as children of Light;" those who are partakers of darkness will live consistent with their nature (5:7-14).

THE WILL OF THE LORD IS FOR HIS PEOPLE TO LIVE CAREFULLY AND CAUTIOUSLY BY LIVING CONSISTENTLY WITH THE WISDOM OF HIS WORD (5:17).

The poetic passage in verse 14 may be an allusion to Isaiah 26:19 and 60:1. One who has been participating "in the unfruitful deeds of darkness" (5:11) is to "awake" and "arise from the dead," which means to lay aside those deeds. "And Christ will shine on you" means that the Lord is pleased with the one who turns from those deeds. The days of our life are filled with dangers and deceptions; therefore, we need to rely upon wisdom, using our time wisely (5:15-16). The will of the Lord is for His people to live carefully and cautiously by living consistently with the wisdom of His Word (5:17).

Drunkness is the abuse of alcohol from overindulgence. As opposed to being "drunk with wine" (which would also include any drugs that stupefy), the Christian is to "be filled with the Spirit" (5:18; cf. Col 3:16). The believer determines the will of God, and how to obey and serve Him by the Holy Spirit's enablement, as opposed to being drunk which leads to ruin and the immorality already described in verses 3-4.

THE BELIEVER DETERMINES THE WILL OF GOD, AND HOW TO OBEY AND SERVE HIM BY THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ENABLEMENT. . . .

Verses 19-21 indicate four participles—"speaking," "making melody" (music), "giving thanks," and being "subject" (submitting)—that modify the verb "be filled" in verse 18. The first two participles suggest the importance of Scripture and music to be filled with (or by) the Holy Spirit. A thankful attitude is the third characteristic of being filled, and the final characteristic is submission (obedience and respect) to authorities, whether internally-earned authority (*dunamis*, δύναμις) or an externally-conferred authority (*exousia*, ἐξουσία) (cf. 5:33; 1 Pet 3:1-6). As we let the Word of God dwell richly with us (Acts 13:52; Eph 5:18; Col 3:16), we understand the will of God. The Holy Spirit applies God's truth to our lives, and as we yield ourselves in obedient stewardship, allowing ourselves to be governed by the truth, we experience God's empowerment and enablement.

ABOUT CAPITOL COMMISSION

Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come. With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you. The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.