

Walk in Love and Light

Ephesians 5:1-17

Ephesians 5:1-17 - *“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any 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 be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep. Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord.”

Background Notes

Ephesians 4 begins the “practical application” division of the letter to the Ephesians. All the exhortations in the second half of the letter are based on the doctrine and teaching that is given in the first half. In other words, we are to be what we are. For example, the doctrine in the first half of the epistle is that we are one in the Spirit, and all believers constitute the Body of Christ. Therefore we are to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Those are just two of the life applications in the second half of Ephesians that are based on doctrines taught of the first half.

Ephesians 4 exhorted us to “be what we are.” In Ephesians 5 these exhortations continue. Because we are now in God’s family, we should walk in love. Because we are no longer in spiritual darkness, we are to walk in the light.

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers should walk in love.

Verse 1: “walk in love...” How do we live a life of love?

a. **Imitate God** (v1). *“Therefore be imitators of God, as dear children.”* Notice the family context. As children love to imitate their parents, so we should imitate our Heavenly Father. Were you ever embarrassed when your children imitated you? Unfortunately, our children imitate our bad points as well as our good points, don’t they? But God is perfect, and believers are called to imitate the character of God.

Let’s imitate Him in the way we treat our brothers and sisters. Look back at the last verse of chapter 4. As God is kind, tenderhearted, and forgives, so we should be kind, tenderhearted and forgive one another, just as He forgave us.

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.” God is love. Are we walking in love by imitating God?

b. **Sacrifice self** (v2). *“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”* The Lord Jesus loved us to the point of sacrifice. He offered up His own perfect life before God as a substitute for us - as a sacrifice for us. The “sweet-swelling aroma” refers to the sacrifices in the Old Testament that were acceptable and pleasing to God.

In John 15:13, the Lord Jesus said, *“Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”* Are you walking in love? Would you literally sacrifice your life for the fellow believers who are sitting in church near you? Would you literally sacrifice anything you own for any fellow believer who is sitting within a few feet of you? You can’t walk in love if you are unwilling to sacrifice self. Are you walking in love? Believers should walk in love.

2. Believers should walk in light.

Verse 8: *“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”* How do we walk in light?

a. **Practice purity** (v3-14). We could certainly have broken up these verses for our outline, but I’ve lumped them together and made two sub-points. In verses 3 and 4 God sets a high standard, and He expects every believer to live up to His high standard. We can understand the mention of fornication in verse 3 – “Don’t let it even be mentioned among you!” But what verse 4 - “coarse jesting”? Does this mean that believers can’t tell jokes? No, that’s not what the Bible is saying here. Of course you can tell a few jokes, but our jokes should be good jokes, not coarse jokes - wholesome jokes, not borderline jokes. Let’s be careful to keep our conversations “in the Light.”

What about verses 5 and 6? *“For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any 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.”* Does this mean that someone who has committed any of these sins can’t go to Heaven? No - but it does mean that the person who *continues to willfully practice* these sinful behaviors is *not a believer*. The same thought is found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”* Many of these sins are tolerated in our society today – in fact, some of them are even condoned. But God has not changed His standards, so don’t let our corrupt and degraded culture brainwash you and drag down your values and attitudes. *“Let no one deceive you with empty words” (v6).*

In verses 8-12, the fruit of the light is contrasted with the works of darkness. *“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.”* Notice it is the *fruit* of the light and the *works* of darkness. It is not the fruit of the light in contrast to the fruit of darkness. There is no fruit in darkness because there is no light! There are only unfruitful deeds or works. This is very similar to Galatians 5 where we have the *“fruit of the Spirit”* and the *“works of the flesh.”*

Verse 9 tells us the fruit of the light is all goodness, righteousness, and truth. What a trio! Are all three of these fruits seen in your life - or are there some “gray areas” and “white lies”? Verses 11 and 12 say that we are to expose shameful deeds that are done in secret. When we, as believers, practice purity and walk in the light, we automatically expose what is sinful and shameful. Verse 13 definitely shows that it means exactly that.

Verse 14 may be a combination of quotations from the Old Testament, or it may be a verse from an early hymn. The primary idea is that we are not to just *become* Christians – we are to *be* Christians. When we live as followers of Jesus Christ, we will automatically expose the deeds of darkness. For example: *“Let greed not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints.”* If you’re a greedy Christian, you can’t expose the sin of greed.

Just as physical light exposes what may be hidden in the darkness of night, so moral light will expose the sinful deeds of darkness. Is there enough light in your life that it will expose dark and sinful deeds? The Lord Jesus said that He is the light of the World (John 8:12) - but He also said, *“You are the light of the world”* (Matthew 5:14). So, we don’t sweep sin under the rug! We don’t hide it - we expose it by practicing purity and being what we are - lights in the world. This is what it means to walk in light.

b. **Walk wisely** (v15-17).

Our way of life should be characterized by wisdom, so that we never linked to evil in any way - or even the *appearance* of evil. For example, when I'm counseling a female student at Emmaus Bible College, I avoid even the appearance of evil by keeping my office door open. That's walking wisely. Verse 15 says that you're a fool if you don't use common sense and walk wisely!

Verse 16 says that we are to "redeem the time" – we are to use every opportunity to serve the Lord. This is also walking wisely. "Make hay while the sun shines" is walking wisely.

What does it mean to walk in light? Practice purity and walk wisely. Believers should walk in light.

Practical Application

You, too, can know the will of God for your life.

How many of you would like to know the will of God for your life? How many of you actually *do* know the will of God for your life? Well, you *can* know the will of God for your life. The key is found in our second doctrinal point: practice purity and walk wisely. *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light...finding out what is acceptable to the Lord"* (v8,10).

Practice purity in your life, and you'll come to know by experience what direction in life is pleasing to the Lord. And - maybe even more to the point – *"do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is"* (v17). Walk wisely and you'll come to understand what is God's will for your life. So, practice purity and walk wisely and you, too, can know the will of God for your life.