

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes: Ephesians 5

"Living As Children Of Light"

7/24/13

SUMMARY

Paul continues to exhort Christians to walk in a manner worthy of their calling (cf. 4:1). Having described the need to walk in unity and in purity, he now urges them to imitate God and **"walk in love"** with Christ as their example. Such love requires that all forms of immorality and filthy speech not even be named among them. Since the wrath of God is to come upon the sons of disobedience, Christians must not be deceived by nor partake with those who engage in such evil deeds (1-6).

Having passed from darkness to light in coming to Christ, we should also **"walk as children of light"**. This includes producing the fruit of the Spirit such as goodness, righteousness and truth, thereby demonstrating what is acceptable to the Lord. We cannot participate in the shameful works of darkness, but instead must expose them. This we do by letting Christ's light shine in us, for such light will naturally make the darkness manifest by way of contrast (7-14).

As the days are evil and the time is short, Christians must **"walk as wise"** and make the best use of their time. This requires an understanding of the Lord's will. Christians are also to be filled with the Spirit, as evidenced by singing together, praying with thanksgiving, and submitting to one another in the fear of God (15-21).

The chapter ends with what we might describe as a call to **"walk in matrimonial harmony"**. Wives are exhorted to respect their husbands, submitting to them as to the Lord. Husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the church, and even as they love their own bodies. In the course of such instructions Paul takes the opportunity to reveal the Lord's desire to present to Himself a glorious church, holy and without blemish, which is why He gave Himself for it (22-33).

I. A CALL TO WALK IN LOVE (1-7)

EPHESIANS 5:1, 2

Just as children imitate their parents, we should follow God's example. His great love for us led him to sacrifice himself so that we might live. Our love for others should be of the same kind—a love that goes beyond affection to self-sacrificing service.

EPHESIANS 5:4

Obscene stories and coarse jokes are so common that we begin to take them for granted. Paul cautions, however, that improper language should have no place in the Christian's conversation because it does not reflect God's gracious presence in us. How can we praise God and remind others of his goodness when we are speaking coarsely?

EPHESIANS 5:5-7

Paul is not forbidding all contact with unbelievers. Jesus taught his followers to befriend sinners and lead them to him (Luke 5:30-32). Instead, Paul is speaking against condoning the life-style of people who make excuses for bad behavior and recommend its practice to others—whether they are in the church or outside of it. Such people can quickly pollute the church and endanger its unity and

purpose. We must befriend unbelievers if we are to lead them to Christ, but we must be wary of those who are viciously evil, immoral, or opposed to all that Christianity stands for. Such people are more likely to influence us for evil than we are likely to influence them for good.

II. A CALL TO WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT (8-14)

EPHESIANS 5:8

As people filled with light, our actions should reflect our faith. We should live above reproach morally so that we will reflect God's goodness to others. Jesus stressed this truth in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:15, 16).

EPHESIANS 5:10-14

It is important to avoid the "worthless deeds of evil and darkness" (any pleasure or activity that results in sin), but we must go even further. Paul instructs us to expose these deeds, because our silence may be interpreted as approval. God needs people who will take a stand for what is right. Christians must lovingly speak out for what is true and right.

EPHESIANS 5:14

This is not a direct quote from Scripture but was probably taken from a hymn well known to the Ephesians. The hymn seems to have been based on Isaiah 26:19; 51:17; 52:1; 60:1; and Malachi 4:2. Paul was appealing to the Ephesians to wake up and realize the dangerous condition into which some of them had been slipping.

III. A CALL TO WALK AS WISE (15-21)

EPHESIANS 5:15, 16

By referring to these days as evil, Paul was communicating his sense of urgency because of evil's pervasiveness. We need the same sense of urgency because our days are also difficult. We must keep our standards high, act wisely, and do good whenever we can.

EPHESIANS 5:18

Paul contrasts getting drunk with wine, which produces a temporary "high," to being filled with the Spirit, which produces lasting joy. Getting drunk with wine is associated with the old way of life and its selfish desires. In Christ, we have a better joy, higher and longer lasting, to cure our depression, monotony, or tension. We should not be concerned with how much of the Holy Spirit we have but with how much of us the Holy Spirit has. Submit yourself daily to his leading and draw constantly on his power.

EPHESIANS 5:20

When you feel down, you may find it difficult to give thanks. Take heart—in all things God works for our good if we love him and are called by him (Romans 8:28). Thank God, not for your problems but for the strength he is building in you through the difficult experiences of your life. You can be sure that God's perfect love will see you through.

IV. A CALL TO WALK IN MATRIMONIAL HARMONY (22-33)

EPHESIANS 5:21, 22

Submitting to another person is an often misunderstood concept. It does not mean becoming a doormat. Christ—at whose name “every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Philippians 2:10)—submitted his will to the Father, and we honor Christ by following his example. When we submit to God, we become more willing to obey his command to submit to others, that is, to subordinate our rights to theirs. In a marriage relationship, both husband and wife are called to submit. For the wife, this means willingly following her husband’s leadership in Christ. For the husband, it means putting aside his own interests in order to care for his wife. Submission is rarely a problem in homes where both partners have a strong relationship with Christ and where each is concerned for the happiness of the other.

EPHESIANS 5:22-24

In Paul’s day, women, children, and slaves were to submit to the head of the family: Slaves would submit until they were freed, male children until they grew up, and women and girls their whole lives. Paul emphasized the equality of all believers in Christ (Galatians 3:28), but he did not suggest overthrowing Roman society to achieve it. Instead, he counseled all believers to submit to one another by choice—wives to husbands and also husbands to wives; slaves to masters and also masters to slaves; children to parents and also parents to children. This kind of mutual submission preserves order and harmony in the family, while it increases love and respect among family members.

Although some people have distorted Paul’s teaching on submission by giving unlimited authority to husbands, we cannot get around it: Paul told wives to submit to their husbands. The fact that a teaching is not popular is no reason to discard it. According to the Bible, the man is the spiritual head of the family, and his wife should acknowledge his leadership. But real spiritual leadership involves service. Just as Christ served the disciples, even to the point of washing their feet, so the husband is to serve his wife. A wise and Christ-honoring husband will not take advantage of his leadership role, and a wise and Christ-honoring wife will not try to undermine her husband’s leadership. Either approach causes disunity and friction in marriage.

EPHESIANS 5:22-28

Why did Paul tell wives to submit and husbands to love? Perhaps Christian women, newly freed in Christ, found submission difficult; perhaps Christian men, used to the Roman custom of giving unlimited power to the head of the family, were not used to treating their wives with respect and love. Of course both husbands and wives should submit to each other (5:21), just as both should love each other.

EPHESIANS 5:25

Some Christians have thought that Paul was negative about marriage because of the counsel he gave in 1 Corinthians 7:32-38. These verses in Ephesians, however, show a high view of marriage. Here marriage is not a practical necessity or a cure for lust, but a picture of the relationship between Christ and his church! Why the apparent difference? Paul’s counsel in 1 Corinthians was designed for a state of emergency during a time of persecution and crisis. Paul’s counsel to the Ephesians is more the biblical ideal for marriage. Marriage, for Paul, is a holy union, a living symbol, a precious relationship that needs tender, self-sacrificing care.

EPHESIANS 5:25-30

Paul devotes twice as many words to telling husbands to love their wives as to telling wives to submit to their husbands. How should a man love his wife? (1) He should be willing to sacrifice everything for her, (2) make her well-being of primary importance, and (3) care for her as he cares for his own body. No wife needs to fear submitting to a man who treats her in this way.

EPHESIANS 5:26, 27

Christ's death makes the church holy and clean. He cleanses us from the old ways of sin and sets us apart for his special sacred service (Hebrews 10:29; 13:12). Christ cleansed the church by the washing of baptism. Through baptism we are prepared for entrance into the church just as ancient Near Eastern brides were prepared for marriage by a ceremonial bath. It is God's Word that cleanses us (John 17:17; Titus 3:5).

EPHESIANS 5:31-33

The union of husband and wife merges two persons in such a way that little can affect one without also affecting the other. Oneness in marriage does not mean losing your personality in the personality of the other. Instead, it means caring for your spouse as you care for yourself, learning to anticipate his or her needs, helping the other person become all he or she can be. The creation story tells of God's plan that husband and wife should be one (Genesis 2:24), and Jesus also referred to this plan (Matthew 19:4-6).