

Ephesians 5:1-21

Paul continues his discussion on the conduct of believers. What does Paul prescribe for believers (v. 1)? As "*dearly loved children*" of God, we are to be imitators of our heavenly Father (Matthew 5:48) looking to Him as our example and model (1 Peter 1:15-16). Children are natural imitators. They often do just what they see their parents do. When we act according to our new nature, as children of God, we will imitate Him.

What serves as the basis for this imitation (v. 1)? God's example of forgiveness in 4:32 forms the basis of Paul's exhortation here. The connection is this: God in Christ has forgiven you. Now be imitators of God in forgiving one another.¹

How are we to imitate God (v. 2)? Namely, by loving others. The measure and model of our love should be Christ's example of love for us. He gave Himself for us by dying on a Cross at Calvary.

How did God view the death of His Son (v. 2)? His self-sacrifice was both pleasing and acceptable to God, "*as a fragrant offering and sacrifice.*"

What are some practical ways we can be imitators of God/Jesus and live a life of love? Forgive one another, be kind and compassionate. Give yourself for others in self-giving love. Be an intercessor (Romans 8:34).

What are the vile practices described by Paul (v. 3)? Sexual immorality, impurity and greed. There should be no hint of these perversions in the believer's life. They should not even be *discussed* in any way that might lessen their sinful and shameful character (Deuteronomy 12:30; Psalms 16:4).

What does Paul say the Christian's speech should be free from (v. 4)? Obscenity refers to dirty speech. Foolish talk probably describes talk that just wastes time, not necessarily "small talk." Coarse joking does not mean joking necessarily, but vulgar joking that uses clever wordplays, such as double entendres. This type of speech is inappropriate for saints, who should be full of thanksgiving since they have received so much.²

What is Paul's warning (v. 5)? People (non-believers) whose lives persist in harboring these sins are lost, are in their sins, and are on the way to hell (Galatians 5:21). This verdict is in sharp contrast to the world's current attitude that sex offenders are sick and need psychiatric treatment. Men say immorality is a sickness; God calls it sin. Men condone it; God condemns it. Men say the answer is psychoanalysis; God says the answer is regeneration.³ The consequences of chasing after these idols are eternal; there is no chance of an inheritance.

What does Paul further stress (v. 6)? Do not be deceived by "*empty words.*" These empty words are the words of the world teaching that living a moral Christian life is unimportant.....words that run contrary to God's Word. They are "empty" because they contain no truth. They say morals are entirely a matter of the culture in which we live, and that deviant behavior is perfectly acceptable. Such words invoke the wrath of God.

Why should we, as Christians, not partake with unbelievers in their evil deeds (v. 8)? We once lived in darkness but we have been rescued (Colossians 1:13) and now live in the Light that is Jesus Christ (John 8:12). Again, the behavioral emphasis is repeated: you *are* children of light, so *live* like children of light. Honor and glorify God with your life.

What is the "fruit of the light" (v. 9)? Those qualities that reflect God's character (i.e., the fruit that the Spirit produces: Galatians 5:22-23). *Goodness* means moral excellence in everything. *Righteousness* means integrity in all dealings with God and men. *Truth* means honesty and reality. Put them all together and you have the light of a Christ-filled life shining forth in a scene of dismal darkness.⁴

What is the child of light directed to do (v. 10)? He/she should continually be trying" to discover "*what pleases the Lord*" so they can do it and please God. **How do we find out what pleases the Lord?** Subject every thought, word, and action to the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit. Ask, "What does the Lord think about this?" Search the scriptures. He is pleased above all by a right heart (Psalms 51:16-17).

What else is the child of light directed to do (v. 11)? Stay away from those who are linked with the "*fruitless deeds of darkness.*" Don't participate with them or display an attitude that might indicate tolerance or leniency

toward their deviant behavior. Instead, "*expose*" those who do them, by a life of holiness lived next to them, and secondly, by words of correction spoken under the direction of the Holy Spirit. These serve to expose them for what they are.

What else must believers not do (v. 12)? Believers should not even discuss in normal conversation the "*secret*" dark things people do. Discussing these shameful things will just draw attention to them, and may make them attractive to the carnal-minded. It is better to keep what they do in the dark, in the dark.⁵

When the light of believers shines on evil deeds, what happens (v. 13) Light reveals deeds of darkness which enables them to be seen for what they are, namely, evil. So, a holy Christian life reveals, by contrast, the sinfulness of unregenerate lives.

What is Paul's message to the believers (v. 14)? This is either a call to the believers to wake up and rise from the deadness and spiritual apathy of their former unsaved lifestyles or it is a call to the spiritually dead sinners to wake up and see what the light has illuminated, i.e., Jesus Christ. In either case, this is a call to action with the end result being that "*Christ will shine on you*" in blessing.

How and why should we live (walk) wisely (vv. 15-16)? By recognizing and seizing every opportunity, every divine appointment, to please and glorify the Lord. Every day brings its opened doors, its vast potential to live for Christ. This is important, because we live in days in which evil influences and evil individuals dominate. They remind us God will not always strive with man, the day of grace will soon close, the opportunities for worship, witness, and service on earth will soon be forever ended.⁶

What instructions does Paul give next (v. 17)? The foolish lack wisdom; they do not understand the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). To be wise, we must comprehend intellectually what God's "will" is. Only after we do that can we please God (v. 10). God's will includes allowing Him to control (fill) us, being joyful, prayerful and thankful always (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18), and being subject to one another.

Often times we think of the Lord's will as a road map of the future. But God's will is clearly revealed in the scriptures in the form of commands, as well as obedience and behavior expectations, etc. God's will lies in a relationship: Matthew 6:33 *Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness....* Someone has said, "90% of God's will is in the *right now*."

What are the negative and positive commands of v. 18? Do not abuse alcohol (negative). The Scriptures do not condemn the use of wine, but they do condemn its abuse. The Lord Jesus made wine for use as a beverage at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11).

Be filled with the Holy Spirit (positive). Paul's grammar clearly says, "*be constantly, moment by moment, being filled* with the Holy Spirit." The filling of the Holy Spirit is not a one-time event that we live off of for the rest of our days. It is a constant filling, our ongoing responsibility, asking to be filled, and receiving the filling by faith.

What are the four directives associated with being filled with the Spirit (vv. 19-21)?

1. **Speak to one another** -- talk about the things of the Lord using the Psalms and hymns as the backdrop.
2. **Sing to the Lord** -- inward, heartfelt joy and vocal praise to God.
3. **Always give thanks** -- a deep sense of appreciation and a spontaneous expression of it.
4. **Submit to one another** -- willingly serving others and being under them, motivated by recognition of the Lord and Master of all.

¹ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1940). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Galatians, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 106

³ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1942). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ Ibid. p. 1943

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. p. 1944