

LECTURES ON EPHESIANS

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BODY—ITS WORTHY WALK (4:1-16) PART II

II. WALK NOT AS OTHER GENTILES, (4:17-32)

In verses 17-24 Paul continues to unfold what the walk of the Christian should be:

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

We have the negative side of our walk set forth in these verses.

In the preceding verses we are told that we should **“Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith”** we **“are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”** Now we have certain things set before us in which should be conspicuous by their absence in our lives, for we are told that we are not to **“Walk as other Gentiles walk”** (v. 17). **“Other Gentiles,”** of course, mean unregenerate people.

Paul reviews the characteristics of the walk of **“other Gentiles,”** which apply to every unregenerate man regardless of talents or culture. Such is the walk of the **“unrenewed”** man as God sees him.

The first mentioned is **“The vanity of the mind,”** egotism, strutting around as though we were something when we are in reality nothing. The natural man walks **“in the vanity of”** his **“mind.”** He is guided by that mind rather than by the revelation of God found in His Word.

That is the reason why unregenerate men make such fools of themselves when they talk about spiritual things, and why they can believe such strange things.

The fairy tale of the doctrine of evolution and others which ensnare hearts and souls are the products of the minds of men who live by their heads rather than by their hearts. No man, unrenewed in mind and heart by Christ, can teach you one thing about God though he be great in scientific knowledge and attainment, for, **“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”** (I Corinthians 2:14).

When any of my young people enter a college or a university, I always remind them what God has said concerning the natural man. Read the words in I Corinthians 2:14: **“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”**

The words do not say, *“He will not know them;”* they say, **“He cannot know them.”**

The reason for this inability is because they are spiritually discerned.

- Some things are microscopically discerned because they are invisible to the naked eye.
- Some things are telescopically discerned. They can only be discerned through a telescope.

There are things which are spiritually discerned.

The world’s greatest intellects are of no avail, in fathoming or understanding spiritual matters, unless they are illuminated by the Spirit of God.

That is the reason why Christless men, though cultured and possessing every educational qualification, are so ignorant when they begin to speculate about who God is and what God is like. To be sure these men may talk with authority about matters in this material world, but they cannot give any information concerning the spiritual realm. Why?

Verse 18 says: **“Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”**

What a description of the natural man! He is without life, without light. The hopelessness into which such a one falls when he resists the Spirit of God for years is described in verse 19: **“Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”** **“Past feeling.”** The words mean *“beyond pain,”* and refer to the same spiritual state described in I Timothy 4:2: **“Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.”**

The Spirit of God arouses the conscience of a person by His convicting power, but by persistently resisting the Spirit of God the conscience may cease to accept accusation and arousal. **“Past feeling”** is the final earthly state into which an unregenerate man, continually walking in rebellion against God, can live.

The more he strives to understand things while in an unregenerate state, the more he walks in the **“vanity”** of his own **“mind.”**

While living in Australia, I spent one holiday in the sheep country. Hearing that heifers were to be branded, I went out to see the procedure. The heifers were first bound to the ground; then a red hot figure was placed on the body of each animal. The noise and the faces of those animals still come to my mind, groaning and rolling their eyes in pain. After the brand had been placed, they were freed and ran away licking their wounds. Had you gone three weeks later to one of those heifers and made a cut with a knife on the branded place, it would not have pained her. The heat so paralyzes the nerves in that part that the heifers are “**past feeling.**”

The Spirit of God arouses a man and convicts a man, but if that man continues his life without heeding the Spirit, he will become “**past feeling.**” I have met many people in that condition, and I fear that many in the world are rapidly approaching that point. That is the reason why so many people act the way they do today and can sleep eight hours without a burdened conscience. They are “beyond feeling.” I wonder if there is a reader, unconverted, whose heart is aroused to see the need of salvation sometimes. I beg you to accept Christ while you have feeling, and before you come to the place where the Gentile nations were in the days of Paul, “**past feeling.**”

When I write about a person being “**past feeling,**” to my mind comes a man in a small town in Texas where I had a pastorate.

A woman, and sometimes her husband, a blacksmith, attended my church, usually sitting in the front seats and listening while I poured out the story of the unsearchable riches of Christ. During the service tears rolled down the face of that big man, but when approached after the service and asked to accept the Lord, he always answered, “Not tonight.”

One day his wife said to me, “Mr. Talbot, some evening when the Spirit has touched my husband, you must spend the night at our house.”

One evening she announced, “Tonight is the night,” so I went. After we had talked for a while, the woman retired and we were left alone. I put before him his need of Christ and again tears rolled down his face, but he said, “Not tonight—some other time.”

He arose and walking from the room said, “Here you will find your room to sleep, but as for me accepting Christ, not tonight.”

Soon after that incident I was planning to leave the United States and cross the ocean to Australia. Before leaving, however, I met this man. Not having seen him for some time, I said, “I am going away, but I want to see you accept Christ before I go.”

This time a sneer covered his face; he laughed at me, and said, “That’s all a fairy tale.”

I said, “The time will come when you will shed tears over the very thing about which you are laughing.”

He said, “I am stronger than I was.”

I said, “No, you are not. You are coming to the place that the Gentile nations did, described in Ephesians.”

Later he became ill with blood poisoning caused by a boil on his neck. He lapsed into unconsciousness and died without accepting Christ. He went into the presence of God with a seared conscience, a conscience “**past feeling.**”

This had been the condition of these Ephesians until the Spirit of God convicted them of sin. They came to the place where they cried, “**What must I do to be saved?**” Christian, it was mercy and love through the Spirit which awakened us from that condition, and made us bow before the Son of God and cry, “**What must I do to be saved?**”

In a letter from a woman expressing her thanks to God for salvation and her gratitude for the privilege of learning from Him, she said, “The hardest trial which I bear is to see my relatives listen to the gospel time after time, but pay no attention to it. They do not seem to be touched at all, and yet some people accept the Lord the first time they hear the gospel.”

The explanation of their lack of response is that they are rapidly coming to the heart condition where they are “beyond pain.” When a person comes to that place where his life is unmoved by the Spirit of God, his life is affected by it; his morals are overthrown and he gives himself over to “**lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.**”

How thankful we should be when the Spirit awakens one in that condition and causes him to see the enormity of sin and cry out, “**Lord, what must I do to be saved?**”

These words in Chapter 4 were given to the Ephesians and are for us that we might know what characterizes the walk of a regenerate man, and to warn us about the walk of an unsaved man.

Is there anyone reading this whose life is what Paul describes in these verses? Are there moments in your life when your heart cries for something better than you have? Those yearnings for purity and holiness are inculcated by the Spirit of God. If you steel your heart against them, those desires will vanish and you will be “**past feeling.**”

A woman made an appointment to see me, and when she came, she told me a terrible story.

She was “sick and tired” of her life and wanted to know if there was a way out of it all. Thank God, the Lamb of God is the Way, and I told her the wondrous story of grace. She accepted Him as Saviour, and was later baptized. Today that woman lives a happy life with God’s people.

There is cleansing for you, if you are living a life displeasing to God.

In Isaiah 1:18 we read, “**Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.**”

God certainly knows how to word His pleas, does He not?

He did not say, “Though they be black, or blue, or some other color.” He said, “**Though they be red like crimson.**” Why like crimson? Because crimson cannot be bleached. Dyers have no acid or chemical which can bleach it or blot it out. Paper is made of old rags. These are sorted, all colors placed in one pile except red, for they cannot be bleached for use in making white or light paper. The red rags are used to make red blotters.

And God says, “**Though yours sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.**”

There is heart purity for the sinner. There is a possibility of the red sin stains being washed away. How? By the blood of Christ. When a man is cleansed and washed in the blood of Christ, as the Ephesians were, he is to walk “**worthy**” of the vocation. His walk is to be different from the walk of the Christless man.

In verse 20 Christ is introduced as an Example, the Example in all things. “**But ye have not so learned Christ.**”

He walked in conformity to the will of the Father; He did the things that pleased His Father during the days of His earthly pilgrimage. We are to walk as He walked. As we read His Word and hear His voice, we receive strength to do those things that please Him. Thus, we not only have the power to put off the “**former conversation**” (the former manner of life of the old man) but also to walk as He walked because of the renewing of our minds by the Spirit.

Our minds are renewed as we feed upon the Word of God, just as our bodies are nourished when we eat nourishing food. The way to become strong physically is to eat nourishing food; the way to be strong spiritually is to eat the food that will give strength to the spirit. The food is the Word of God. You will never be able to walk like Him if you neglect the daily reading of God’s Word.

Some people wonder why it is that they are so weak when temptation faces them and why they find themselves without sufficient strength to walk as they know they should as Christians. Why, they go for weeks, even months without opening the Bible. What physical invalids we would be if we treated our bodies in the way that we treat our spirits!

From verse 25 to the close of the chapter further practical exhortations concerning the walk of a Christian are given.

These verses exhort us, as children of God, to put away lying which we will certainly do if we walk as did the Man Christ Jesus. He was full of grace and full of truth; He was the “**truth.**” As you look to Christ and feed upon His Word, you will put away all that belongs to the realm of falsehood and pretense.

A Christian is to be exact in little things—honest. In making bargains we must promise to do only what we can do. Do not overstate the case if you try to sell something. Do not sell something for wool when it is part cotton. It might be all right for someone walking “**in the vanity**” of the mind to do so, but it is not right for a Christian.

The exhortation in verse 26: **“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath,”** perplexes many people; but there is such a thing as righteous indignation. The Lord knew what it was to be angry, yet He lived a sinless life. His eyes flashed with righteous anger when He saw the Pharisees living double lives and He said, **“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer”** (Matthew 23:14).

It is a sin for a Christian not to be angry when the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is taken in vain, or when the name of God is blasphemed within our hearing.

On one occasion I was seated in a barber chair. Several men were waiting, and I heard their conversation. One used the Lord’s name in vain, and I turned to that man, saying, “My friend, the name you are using in vain is the most precious in the world to me. He died for me and saved me. If you want to damn someone, damn Louis T. Talbot, but do not use that name in my presence.”

The man begged my pardon and told me that he had a Christian mother. The Lord may use those few words to save that man some day. We read in Exodus 20:7, **“For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”**

What then is sinful anger? It is when self and selfishness are projected in the matter.

When someone says something about you and you get your feelings hurt, the whole matter pertains to self. There is then sin in your anger. If you have been stirred to sinful anger or have spoken unkind words to a fellow brother or sister, heed the exhortation: **“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath”** (v. 26). If we practice going to people and confessing every time we lose our temper for selfish reasons, we will become more careful about giving vent to our feelings.

Let me repeat a story about myself with regard to this.

One Sunday I had prepared to preach on the coming of the Lord when in the South. I used to write out my sermons then, so I went to my office early in order to have a little time of fellowship with the Lord and look over my sermon before the meeting. The janitor had arrived before me, and had destroyed my notes, thinking that they were scraps of paper. I said some ugly things to him when he told me. He said that he was sorry and left. I went into the auditorium, hoping to preach the sermon from what I could remember. But as I sat on the platform I knew that I could not preach that sermon with the janitor sitting in the congregation thinking of those unkind things which I had said. I left the platform, went to him and asked him to step outside with me. Poor man, undoubtedly he thought I was going to start another fight with him, but I confessed that I had sinned and asked him to forgive me. He shook my hand and asked me to forgive him.

I returned to the pulpit ready to preach, the janitor listening and enjoying the sermon.

That is the meaning of **“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”**

There is another exhortation in verse 28: **“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”**

People who steal do not like to be called thieves. The Christian should be honest. How easy it is nowadays for a man to be slack along this line, appeasing his conscience by saying, “I do not receive much salary and my employer is a wealthy man. He’ll never miss it.”

I was acquainted with a man who told me that he took stamps from his employer because his employer would never miss them. He told me about it and I said, “The thing for you to do is to have a heart-to-heart talk with your employer, confess the whole matter, and replace the stamps with a few extra ones added for good measure. Tell him that you are Christian and that you want him to forgive you.”

A Christian is called upon to walk faithfully, to be honest, and to live a life that will bear the searchlight of close observation and watching by unbelievers. A child of God should be one who can be trusted.

Let us look at the last part of verse 28: **“But rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”**

Do you see the difference between law and grace? Law says we must not steal; grace adds something. You can keep the law by refraining from taking anything that is not yours. Grace says, **“Labour, working with your hands the things which is good, that you may have to give to him that needeth.”** We cannot measure up to God’s holy standard unless we share with others what God in His kindness gives to us.

In verse 29 Paul says a word about the tongue, **“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”**

How much we need to heed this exhortation, for what terrible things our tongues do. Some people have tongues that are as sharp as razor blades, and they use them on everyone with whom they come in contact. Your tongue can be either a mouthpiece for the old nature, or for the new nature. God wants you to yield that member unto Him.

Romans 6:13 says: **“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”**

The word, **“instrument,”** as used here means, *“weapons for military purposes.”*

The devil’s purpose is to use your tongue as a weapon with which to fight the Lord Jesus Christ and other members of the Body of Christ.

It is sad when an unconverted man allows his members, especially his tongue, to be used by the devil, but what a tragedy it is when a Christian does it. Christian, instead of gossiping about people, let your tongue be used to tell forth the glories of His grace, and produce triumphs instead of tragedies.

Verse 30 reads, **“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”**

To walk contrary to the risen Christ is to grieve or to pain the Holy Spirit. There is no Person in the universe so sensitive as the third Person of the Trinity. He is not an influence emanating from God, as the cults desire us to believe; He is a living Person who indwells the heart of every believer. Everything that is done or said contrary to the will of God grieves Him for He listens to everything that we say and do. When we have guests in our homes, how concerned we are that they be happy and comfortable. We want them to feel at home. I only wish that you and I would have the same concern about the Holy Spirit of God, wishing Him to be at home in our hearts. Walking unworthy of our vocation grieves Him.

Verse 30 does not say: “And grieve not the Holy Spirit away.” It is impossible to do that though some hymns suggest that it is possible to do such a thing. In Old Testament days it was possible to grieve the Spirit away. David prayed in Psalm 51:11, **“Take not thy holy spirit from me.”**

Jesus, speaking about the church dispensation which began on the day of Pentecost, stated, **“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever”** (John 14:16).

In Ephesians 4:30 we read that we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit, **“Whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”** The day of redemption is the day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in power to redeem His purchased possession. **“The dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air”** (I Thessalonians 4:16, 17). Our bodies, now called the bodies of humiliation, will then be glorified with the risen Head and we shall enter into the enjoyment of complete salvation.

We are **“sealed”** unto the day of redemption. While it is impossible to grieve the Holy Spirit away from the hearts of the believers, it is possible to grieve the Spirit. When the indwelling Spirit is grieved, one will have no power or joy.

Ephesians 4 concludes: **“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”**

How much malice, anger, and bitterness have we put away? Is there any bitterness in your heart against anyone? Put it away. You may answer, “No one knows how much this person has gossiped about me. How can I put away the bitterness?” I am not telling you to, my friend; the Word of God tells you to put it away.

To what extent are you able to forgive? How many times has the Lord forgiven you? Ten times, dozens of times, thousands of times? Then you forgive in that measure, following His example. **“Walk worthy.”**

III. WALK IN LOVE, (5:1-7)

Chapter 5 continues to unfold what the believer’s walk should be. We are to **“walk in love”** because we are children of light. Let us consider verses 1-7 of this chapter:

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

The word, **“therefore,”** links this statement with the last one in chapter 4, **“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”** We **“walk in love”**; therefore we are **“kind one to another, forgiving one another.”**

We are to maintain this attitude not because God may forgive us, but because **“God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven”** us. Because He has forgiven us all of our trespasses against Him, we are to forgive everyone who trespasses against us. It will be an easy thing for you to forgive wrongs committed against you if you bear in mind that all of the wrongs which you have done God have been forgiven by Him. In this way we become followers of God. One is never so much like God as when he is forgiving someone who has maliciously harmed him or hurt him. If you harbor grudges against and think unkind thoughts about those who have hurt you, you are not an imitator of God. Paul says, **“Be ye therefore followers of God.”** How we need to be followers of Him these days!

I was once staying with a friend, a man of God, in Paris, Texas. A wealthy widow and her servants lived next door whose acquaintance was most difficult to make. Just as she came out of her gate one morning, I passed on my way to study and bade her good morning. At the same hour every day I passed her, always speaking. She finally asked me to come into her house; then she told me such a sad story. Her husband had been murdered. She asked me if she would have to forgive her husband’s murderer before she could be saved. I told her that she could not be saved on the ground of her forgiveness, but that salvation comes because Christ died on Calvary for our sins. One day, while a friend and I were visiting her, she was marvelously saved. The friend with whom I had been staying had suffered sorrow and pain for the cause of Christ. He was preaching one Lord’s Day on **“The Wonders of Christ,”** and that refined, timid woman rose to her feet to say, **“Mr. Flacks, and Mr. Talbot: I forgive everybody, and I forgive the man who blotted out the sun for me, the man who murdered my husband.”** When that woman made that confession, the congregation saw the way of God. **“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.”**

In earthly relationships sometimes we not only see the likeness in features of father and child, but we also see the ways and manners of the father in the child. The love of our Father is forgiving love. **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16). Yet, is it not strange that people live day after day, month after month, and year after year, carrying grudges in their hearts? They talk about burying the hatchet. It is buried, but the handle sticks out. Shame on you, Christian. We are to **“Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”**

Christ, whose we are and to whom we have been linked as members of His Body, walked on this earth in this way of life thirty-three and one-half years. Even on the cross He prayed that the Father would forgive his murderers. To walk thus is to be like Him whose life was a **“sweetsmelling savour”** to God. Such a walk, too, is the antidote for all expressions of the flesh such as are named in the verses that follow, in 3-7. The Ephesian Christians had been pulled out of a cesspool of vice. Because the former things had passed away, they were instructed to walk not in their old ways.

I have been acquainted with many people who have wallowed in the things named in verses 3-7, but a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus has made a complete change in their manner of living as it did in the lives of these Ephesians. God made them new creatures so that the former things passed away. The devil would like to keep a Christian in bondage and drag him back into such cesspools. It is significant that the sin of covetousness is named with such horrible sins as fornication and adultery. One cannot be a follower of God and be a covetous man, any more than he can be a follower of Him and be a fornicator. How searching these words should become to a man who has a purse kept shut with a miser’s fist.

“Foolish talking” is also included among the vices of the unregenerate man. **“Foolish talking”** is the talk of fools. The exhortation does not refer to clean, wholesome fun and humor, but rather, to an artfully-phrased manner of speech, having a double meaning, and which, when examined, has an obscene meaning. It compares with what we today call “smutty” talk.

IV. WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT (5:8-14).

Read verses 8-14:

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

These verses contain an exhortation to real believers. Again we have a contrast between what we were before grace met us and what we are now in Christ. The unsaved man is declared to be **“darkness”**—not merely living in darkness, but he is darkness. The saved man, however, is **“light”** as well as living in the light, for Christ is the Light of the world and He lives in a Christian.

If a man is truly born again it is impossible for him to walk in darkness for any length of time. He is out of his element. A Christian may fall into sin, but he will hate the sin into which he falls and will never be happy until he is delivered. On the other hand, a man who is “**darkness**” finds darkness his element; consequently, he walks in it. What solemn figures these are.

In verse 11 we learn that goodness and righteousness, the fruits of a walk empowered by the Spirit, are outward evidences that a life has been acceptable unto God. Such evidence acts as reproof to those remaining in darkness.

As we walk showing a surrendered life to Christ, our lives reprove those who walk in the darkness, after the flesh. It is not always necessary to reprove people by word of mouth; a godly life is a reproof to people who hold on to selfishness and sin.

Lord Chesterfield, the scoffer, visited good Fenelon. He returned declaring that if he had stayed another day he would have been compelled to become a Christian because of the beautiful life of his host. And yet, Fenelon spoke very little to the scoffer about the need of his heart, Christ.

One night a poor mine worker went into a mission and asked whether they had any more religion. They asked him to state again what he wanted. He said, “I want you to give me the same kind our Bess has.” Apparently Bess had lived a stormy life until she had gone to the mission. Since then she had been so changed, so gentle, so longsuffering, and meek, that her rude husband wanted some of the religion which she showed.

We need to pray that we may not only be lights of the world in high places, pulpits, and platforms, but also be silent salt that is tasted and not seen.

Verse 14 is a challenge to any Christian who is not walking according to the pathway outlined in these chapters. “**Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.**”

Paul writes to a man asleep among the dead. These words are not addressed to an unsaved man. The thought is to arise from among the dead, and become sensible to the responsibilities that are a Christian’s.

It is possible for a believer to live as one asleep and to walk as a dead man.

The Corinthians had that kind of a walk. I Corinthians 3:3: “**For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?**”

The Corinthians were walking as people who had never been regenerated.

God expects you to obey Him. You will never receive further light concerning the will of God until you conform your life to the light you already possess. God gives light and more light as you walk in the light. Hence, the exhortation, “**Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.**”

V. WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY (5:15-6:9).

The circumspect walk is considered in Ephesians 5:15-6:9, which includes the domestic life of believers illustrated by the relationship of Christ to His Body, the church.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

“**Circumspectly**” means “*to pick the way,*” or to be careful how we walk, as though we were walking on a ground filled with broken bottles.

In Australia people build high brick walls with soft cement on top around their property. Before the cement dries, broken bottles and other pieces of glass are stuck in so that when it dries sharp edges protrude, preventing an intruder from climbing over it. A cat walking on the top of such a wall carefully places her feet between the pieces of broken glass. She “*picks her way.*” She is doing what Paul says we are to do as we walk through life’s pilgrimage. The devil has scattered plenty of glass in our way; he has thrown varieties of nets, traps and snares in our path in order to destroy our Christian testimony. But we are to walk “**circumspectly**” as resurrected people.

What does “**redeeming the time**” in verse 16 mean? It really means “*redeeming the opportunity.*” While we are walking through this world, God gives us opportunities to exhibit what grace can do. We are a “**spectacle,**” or a “*theatre*” to the world, demons and angels. As we walk or perform in the power of the Holy Spirit, the world watches everything we do. We must, therefore, “**redeem**” the opportunities afforded us and show the world what grace can do through our lives.

The walk in “**love,**” in “**light,**” the walk according to “**our high calling,**” and “**circumspect**” is not something which we can accomplish through self-effort. It is realized only as we surrender our lives to the indwelling Spirit of God. Therefore in verse 18 Paul says, “**And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.**”

Every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. “**And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father**” (Galatians 4:6).

But every believer is not filled with the Holy Spirit.

A believer is filled with the Spirit when he makes Christ the Lord of his life as well as the Saviour of his soul. To be filled with the Spirit is not a matter of a believer’s having more of the Spirit but rather a matter of the Spirit’s possessing more of the believer. A believer is filled with the Holy Spirit when he puts into the hands of the Spirit the keys which unlock every department of his life.

Now we shall consider verses 19 and 20:

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Salvation expresses itself in songs if one is controlled by the Spirit. Walk as He would have you walk and you will find that the way of the Lord is not only the holiest way, but the happiest way as well. Saved people, filled with the Spirit, have something about which to sing. No circumstances can steal that song. Put the Spirit-filled believer in prison, shackle him, chain him, he will still sing, as Paul and Silas did when in the prison at Philippi. The rapture of the indwelling Spirit gives the note of praise in the darkest hour.

I often hear the students at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles sing:

When we walk with the Lord, in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way.
When we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who trust and obey.

No truer words exist than those in the chorus:

Trust and obey,
for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
but to trust and obey.

Dr. F. B. Meyer was attracted to Christianity by the radiant face of a small boy who had just accepted the Lord as Saviour. To know that you are living in the center of God's will, will give a singing heart. You will radiate so much light that your life will influence the world. We shall have to evidence and promise the world greater happiness and joy than Satan gives before we can win it for Christ.

Look at verse 20 again: **“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Do you know that when you are in the center of God's will, and are Spirit-filled, nothing can touch you without the consent of the Father? No one can say ugly things about you without the will of the Father who gives the devil permission so to speak and act. Whatever test or difficulty comes, you can bow your head and give thanks for anything. You can say,

“Father, I thank Thee that Thou dost permit all things. Recently I received an anonymous letter containing very ugly thoughts, but what a lesson there was for me in it! It could not have come without Thy permission because I am living in the center of Thy will.”

From Ephesians 5:21 to 6:9 Paul presents our earthly relationships as members of the Body of Christ.

The Spirit of God, through Paul, addresses wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, and masters. What a need there is for Christians to heed these exhortations in this Laodicean period. It is the desire of our God that every Christian home should be so ordered that it presents to the world, angels, and demons the relationship of Christ to the church and the relationship of the church to Christ. This is the reason Paul constantly uses the analogy of the husband and wife in relation to Christ and the church. Let us look at these relationships.

First we shall study the exhortation to the wives in verses 21-24:

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

This order is not based on the ground of the superiority of the husband, but rather that the union might be illustrative of the relationship of the church to Christ. God desires that this relationship should exist in the household of the believers.

God has in the heavens an illustration of the church's relationship to Christ—the sun, moon, and stars. The sun rules the day; the moon rules the night. The moon is subservient to the sun, receiving its light from the sun, and reflecting only what the sun gives. The moon shines while the sun is absent, yet the sun shines through the moon into the world. The sun in the Word of God is a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ, while the moon is a symbol of the church. Just as the moon shines while the sun is away, so the church shines in the world while the Lord is in heaven. The Lord reveals His glory through the members here.

The stars represent individual believers. The moon represents believers, collectively. The sun symbolizes the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the significance of the words in Genesis 1:14 where the sun, moon, and stars are for “**signs and seasons.**” We understand that they are for seasons because the sun controls the seasons, but are we conscious of the fact that they are for “**signs**”?

God has not only placed a picture of the church's relationship to Christ in the heavens, but He desires that there might be such a picture in our homes as well.

After Paul gives this admonition to the wives, he exhorts the husbands in verses 25-33:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

An analogy between Christ and the church is drawn again. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. There are many reasons why a man should love his wife, but the one emphasized in these verses is that the relation of the husband to the wife might present to principalities and powers the great truth in Ephesians—Christ and the church.

In verse 32 the “**great mystery**” has to do with the secret which Paul outlines in Ephesians. He reveals a great parallelism between the husband and wife, the church and Christ.

- At the time of creation the side of the man was opened, a rib was removed, and woman was made. In the Gospel of John the side the Lord was opened and the church was formed.
- In the Old Testament times, a deep sleep fell upon Adam when his bride was formed. In the New Testament era, a deep sleep (death) fell upon Christ and the church was formed.
- In the Old Testament, the wife was “**bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.**” In the New Testament the same picture concerning Christ and the church is seen; we are “**bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.**”
- In the Old Testament Adam deliberately chose to share in the destiny of Eve which she had brought about by sin; he went into sin where she was. In the New Testament Christ of His own volition came down where we were and became a sin offering in order that we might be raised.
- From Adam’s side was formed a co-ruler in that garden paradise. When the millennium comes, we, the Bride of Christ, shall be co-rulers with Him.

God had this secret, the “**mystery,**” always before Him, for the “**brides**” of the Old Testament portrayed in type the relationship of the church to Christ, showing His coming glory with that of the glory of the church when He, the King of kings and Lord of lords, returns in splendor and glory for His Bride.

Rebekah consented to marry Isaac, a man whom she did not know and had never seen. A servant whose name in the account is withheld was sent into the far country to seek for a bride for Isaac. The servant typifies the Holy Spirit who is in the world calling, seeking, and finding a Bride for Christ. When He came, He came not to reveal himself, but to reveal Christ, His Master. The servant of old found Rebekah, unfolded to her the glories of his master, then said, “**Wilt thou marry this man?**” How many women today would consent to marry a man whom they had never seen?

We who love Christ are doing that today: “**Whom having not seen, ye love . . .**” (I Peter 1:8). We are a part of the Bride of Christ. We have consented to marry a Man whom we have not seen. There are no direct statements concerning the church in the Old Testament; there are only veiled illustrations of the relationship between the church and Christ. Through these types we better understand God’s plan.

The promises of a redemption given to Adam were shared with Eve. In the New Testament we learn that Christ with the church shares the plan of redemption. Paul, when he wrote the words in chapter 5:32 had these parallelisms in mind. Chapter 6:1-3 reads:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

This injunction is addressed to saved children and shows what that relationship should be between parents and children.

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy” (II Timothy 3:1,2).

Before us are set the characteristics of the godless, Christless children in the last days before the coming of the Son of Man. How habitual it is with children today to address their parents as “the old man, and the old lady.” Can we refrain from wondering if we are living in the last days? This is only one of the shadows foretelling that our King’s return is near. For a child to claim to love the Lord Jesus Christ and at the same time ignore his responsibility and relationship to his parents evidences that he knows little or nothing about the redemption in Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ was a wonderful Example in obedience to parents. It is recorded that He was “**Subject to his parents.**” On the cross, He looked at His mother, and said, “**Woman, behold thy son.**” Speaking to John, He said, “**Behold thy mother.**” What He was saying in effect, was, “*John, take care of Mary. Take her to your home and make her your mother and be a son to her.*” Jesus that day on the cross became a pattern for imitation by all children.

If your mother and father are living, be good to them. Do not send them to a home for the aged; give them a place in your home. Fill their days with sunshine. In so doing you will please God. Many of us try to please God by performing some outstanding service, ignoring thoughtfulness of and love for our parents.

Shortly after I graduated from Moody Bible Institute, my mother passed away. I had always hoped that Mother could spend her last days on earth in my home so that I could have the privilege of filling her days with joy, but I was denied that privilege. It is difficult for me to understand how some people can put their parents in homes for the aged when there is room in their own homes.

Notice verse 3: “**That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.**”

A long life do you desire? Here is one recipe. In these days of diets and scientific experiments, we are always reading recipes for longevity: “Drink orange juice before breakfast, eat spinach, take daily dozens, etc.” In their place they are useful, but God has a recipe for long life—honor your parents.

There is an old saying to the effect that the good die young. That is not always so. It is not a mark of God’s disfavor to live a long time; rather it is oftentimes a mark of His pleasure.

Note the last part of verse 4: “**And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.**” What a timely hour it is for parents to receive such admonition! Parents, if you want to spare yourself wakeful nights caused by worry over your children, remember that while they are around your knees this exhortation should find fulfillment in your care for them. While you have the opportunity to train them, nurture and admonish them in the Lord, do so. The natural bent of the tree is given when it is a sapling. The time to train a life begins before a child is born.

My heart is filled with concern when I read II Timothy 3:2, for I think of my grandchildren and wonder how I can save them from becoming a part of what Paul writes. I read verses 13, 14, 15 and take courage.

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures . . .

Timothy had a wise mother and a wise grandmother, because Paul refers to them when writing to his son in the gospel, Timothy.

Timothy, while a child, was instructed in the things that would make him wise unto salvation. If you want to put a bulwark around your child, send him into the world with the knowledge of God and of Christ. The devil will have a difficult time holding a child who has a memory of a godly mother and father. A young woman will not be turned from the Christian faith to infidelity by a worldly-wise college professor if a mother has breathed into her soul and life the breath of prayer.

The way to rear children is to bring them up to manhood and womanhood in the “**nurture and admonition of the Lord**” by setting an example yourself. Not much can be seen in another life through your exhortation if you are not right with God and do not seek to live for Him.

Now let us consider Paul’s exhortation to servant and master, Ephesians 6:5-9:

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

What wonderful words these are and how timely they are for us today. There is no need to comment on these verses, further than to say that if capital and labor knew the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and should put into execution these admonitions, how different would be the situation confronting the people. “Sit-down” strikes would have a permanent cure for their disease. However, neither employer nor employee can put these principles into execution until they first know Him as their Saviour.

A maid once gave this testimony: “Now that I know the Lord Jesus, I always sweep under the mat. Before I was saved I swept around it.”

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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