

The Apostle Paul's Letter to the Church at Ephesus

Pastor Nathan E. Lewis

Part Four

“Walk” = metaphor for lifestyle/behavior

Day 6 - Read Ephesians 5 -6

In this section of his letter, the Apostle Paul is going to address personal lifestyle/behavior in the context of relationships. We do not “walk” alone. Rather, we are in a relationship with God and with others.

(5:1-2) What does it mean to imitate God? Paul’s answer has to do with our relationship to God. Our heavenly Father is the parent in the relationship and we are the children. Just like a child, who loves his/her parents, imitates them, so we, who love God, should imitate him.

Theology categorizes the attributes of God into two groups: 1) Incommunicable Attributes and 2) Communicable Attributes. Incommunicable attributes are those which God alone possesses - Infinity, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Transcendence - are a few. Communicable attributes are those which God shares with us - Goodness, Love, Mercy, Truth and Wisdom - are a few, which we can share with God, reflecting his perfection and holiness to a small degree.

Paul starts with the big, communicable attribute - Love. He writes, *“Walk in love...”* Remember, “walk” is a metaphor for lifestyle/behavior. How you live/ behave must be in the context of God’s love. Paul is quick to describe the divine love he is commanding of us: 1) it is self-sacrificial love and 2) it is a love offered ultimately to God as an act of worship.

(3-7) Paul in this section of his letter is focusing on relationships and so he returns to his warning against sins that are particularly destructive of relationships. He chooses two of the 10 Commandments to make his point - the 7th Commandment and the 10th Commandment. The 7th = *“Do not commit adultery,”* and the 10th = *“Do not covet your neighbor’s property or relationships.”*

Paul goes beyond the 10 Commandments to say that even crude, dirty and silly speech can be destructive in relationships. Gratefulness expressed would be a better use speech toward the building up of relationships.

(5) It’s critical that we do not miss the big point, which is this: If you destroy human relationships, then you are also destroying your relationship to God. That is precisely what Paul is saying in this verse, thus his parenthetical description of covetousness as more than a sin against our neighbor - it is also a sin against God - idolatry - worshipping/valuing/ cherishing something or someone more than God.

God’s wrath is reserved for those who are not in a loving relationship with him. Paul always has God’s law and God’s grace in mind as he writes. A loving relationship between God and his children is first defined by his provision of the law to govern lifestyle and behavior that is productive and good for self and others. To love God is to obey his law. A loving relationship between God and his children is secondly defined by God’s grace, his provision of forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration for all of us, since we cannot and will not perfectly obey his holy law. Anyone who rebels against these two provisions - God’s law and grace, are described by Paul as *“sons of disobedience.”* God’s wrath - his justice and punishment are poured out upon such people and groups.

In (7) Paul says - Don't partner with "*sons of disobedience.*" To partner with them is to not only sin like them, but more profoundly to agree with them that God's law and grace are inconsequential, unnecessary, and undesirable. The stories of the children of God in the Holy Scriptures show us flawed, sinful human beings. But these children cling to faith in God and struggle to obey. When they disobey, they repent and agree that God's law and grace are good, necessary and desirable. "Sons of disobedience" also sin, just like the children of God, but they do not repent and they have no intention of obeying God, let alone believe that God's grace is sufficient for their reconciliation to God and to their fellow human beings.

(8-10) Now Paul says the same as he did in the preceding verses, but now he uses the metaphor of darkness and light. The "sons of disobedience" are associated with the darkness and the children of God are associated with the light, and so Paul calls them "*children of light.*" He writes, "*Walk as children of light,*" meaning, adopt a lifestyle connected to God's law and grace, choosing obedience and seeking repentance, reconciliation and restoration. "Walk" means, we must behave according to the 10 Commandments and even be careful about what we say and how we say it.

Paul reminds us in (8) that all of us were at one time in the past "*darkness.*" But now, we are "*light in the Lord.*" This means that God has transformed us from darkness to light! "In the Lord," means "united to Christ Jesus." We are united to the Lord Jesus Christ in his death, and so, God's wrath, which struck Jesus on the cross, where he bore our sins, passes by us! We are united to the Lord Jesus Christ in his resurrection, and so new and eternal life has replaced our spiritual death - eternal separation from God.

In (9) the Apostle Paul supplies us with a test of our spiritual location. Are you living in darkness or are you living in light? He says that the fruit - the result - of living in light "*is found in all that is good, and right and true.*"

Good describes a **benefit experienced** not only by us, but by others around us.

Right describes the **appropriateness** of thoughts, words and actions, as well as the appropriateness of the situation and **context** of our thoughts, words and actions.

True = describes **the divine source** of the good and the right. All truth is God's truth.

In (10) Paul tells us that to "*walk as children of light*" includes our discovery of what lifestyle and behavior pleases God. Many of us discover what pleases God by trial and error. We blunder - sinning, then paying the consequences and finally agreeing that such behavior does not please God. The better way to discover what pleases God is, as Paul recommends, "**to discern.**" This word in the Holy Scriptures is inseparably connected to the Holy Spirit's work upon our minds. The Holy Spirit enlightens our minds by teaching us the Holy Scriptures - the very Word of God. The Holy Spirit reminds us of all that Jesus has taught us. Discernment is our applying God's Word to our lifestyle and behavior. The Holy Spirit also empowers us to apply God's Word! To filled with the Holy Spirit means that our minds are open to the Spirit's teaching, our hearts are open to the Spirit's guidance, and our lips, hands and feet are freed by the Spirit to display spiritual fruit in our lifestyle and behavior.

In (11) Paul says it again - don't participate in the non-productive lifestyles and behavior of darkness. Instead we are to expose them. At this point, many zealous children of light jump rashly to pointing out the sins of others. But the exposure of sin must begin with each of us. The exposure firstly and most profoundly has to do with you acknowledging that some of your behavior and your lifestyle is more darkness than light. The exposure has to do with you stopping your participation in the unfruitful works of darkness. Once I'm attending to my own

hypocrisy, then I can begin to publicly describe sin in the larger community. It's not so much my confrontation of individual's sins as much as it is my calling sin, "sin." We are not to pretend in our silence or our speech that sin is acceptable.

(12-14)) Paul tells us that exposure of sin and evil is not talking about it. That's what most of us do. Paul says that it is shameful to talk about sin and evil. In our culture and communities, we have unspoken agreements that lifestyle and behavior are private matters. Most sins and evil are committed secretly. But the light exposes what we have kept secret. How does the light expose sin and evil?

***Firstly**, as we "*walk as children of the light*," our own lifestyle and behavior serves as a sharp contrast to the lifestyle and behavior of the "*sons of disobedience*." The big contrasts are our repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration. The big contrasts are our living according to the 10 Commandments and the whole counsel of God's Word.

***Secondly**, our proclamation of the gospel and our teaching of God's Word as publicly as possible - first universally and generally and then secondly specifically and personally, exposes sin and evil. It's always best to create large spaces in which others can hear and embrace, rather than pointing fingers to quickly, backing someone into a defensive corner.

(you may be able to argue that my order here is backwards, but either order will do the trick as long as both are done in tandem.)

Sin and evil kept secret produces death. The light exposing sin and evil allows for new life! Paul quotes from the prophets - Isaiah and Malachi. Who says that there is not reference to resurrection in the Hebrew Scriptures! Isaiah 60:1 speaks of the Lord rising upon us. Paul calls the Lord, "Christ." In Malachi 4:2 the prophet refers to "*the sun of righteousness rising with healing...*" a metaphor, as far as Paul is concerned, for Jesus Christ, "the son of righteousness." This healing is not a cure for the common cold or cancer as much as it is a cure for our spiritually dead souls. After all it is the sun of "righteousness." This is our resurrection from spiritual death, the transformation of us from darkness to light. The "sun" is not a pun on the "Son," but part of the darkness/light metaphor. The Son of God, Jesus Christ is the "*light of the world that shines in the darkness*" (Gospel of John, Chapter 1).

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Love in Jesus Christ, our Beautiful Savior,
Pastor Nathan E. Lewis



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