

**Ephesians 5:1-17**  
**January 8, 2023**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:** For those of you who have been parents, you know full well that as your babies grew up, they had a strong propensity to imitate you. What are some examples of behaviors your child exhibited that was an imitation you? Were you taken aback? Was it funny? Were you surprised at what they observed? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** Though I have never had a child, I have thoroughly enjoyed watching my baby cousin, Rowan, grow up. He's 11 months old, and he will copy you. If you clap your hands, he claps his hand. If you put a ball on a wooden rail where it will roll, he will do it after you show him what to do with the ball. Garrett, the dad, started clicking his tongue, and Rowan immediately copied it. If you sit with him and hold a book to read to him, he will then try to hold the book himself to copy what the mom did. Rowan now tries to feed his dog with his own food because he sees his parents feeding the dog. It's delightful to watch, but it's also a strong reminder that we need to copy the Lord, which is where our text takes us today.

We are continuing our study in Ephesians where Paul is encouraging believers to be “imitators of God” and “live a life of love.” But he's also not shy about behaviors that should not be present in a believer. Let's read the text.

**BOOK:**

**5** Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup> and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

<sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partners with them.

<sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said:

“Wake up, O sleeper,  
rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

The world in which we live is filled with dangers and deceptions. It is not always easy to live an enlightened life even when we want to. We can get tripped up or ambushed by events and people without even being aware of the danger. We must be very careful to live our life rooted in wisdom, using our time wisely. Not to do so would be foolish. The will of the Lord is that we live carefully, cautiously, always matching our lifestyle with the teachings of Scripture.

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

***Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 2, pp. 43-47). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.***

### **Walk in Love (Eph. 5:1-2)**

This admonition ties in with the last two verses of the previous chapter where Paul has warned us against bitterness and anger. It is tragic when these attitudes show up in the family of God. As a pastor, I have witnessed malice and bitterness in the lives of people as I have conducted funerals and even weddings. You would think that sharing the sorrow of losing a loved one, or sharing a joy of a marriage, would enable people to forgive past wrongs and try to get along with each other. But such is not the case. It takes a real love in the heart, for "charity [love] shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8).

Paul gave several reasons why the Christian ought to walk in love.

***He is God's child.*** Having been born again through faith in Christ, he is therefore one of the “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4); and since “God is love” it is logical that God’s children will walk in love. When Paul encouraged his readers to “walk in love,” he was not asking them to do something that was foreign to the Christian life; for we have received a new nature that wants to express itself in love. The old nature is basically selfish, and for this reason builds walls and declares war. But the new nature is loving, and therefore builds bridges and proclaims peace.

***He is God's beloved child.*** “Be ye imitators of God as beloved children.” Imagine, God speaks of us the same way He spoke of Jesus Christ: “This is My beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17). In fact, the Father loves us as He loves His Son (John 17:23). We are born into a loving relationship with the Father that ought to result in our showing love to Him by the way we live. What more could the Father do to express His love to us? Is it asking too much for us to “walk in love” to please Him?

***He was purchased with a great price.*** “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). But He laid down His life for His enemies (Rom. 5:10). Our love for Him is our response to His love for us. Paul compares Christ’s sacrifice on the cross to the Old Testament “sweet-savor” sacrifices that were presented at the altar of the temple (Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; 2:9). The idea behind “sweet-savor” is simply that the sacrifice is well-pleasing to God. This does not suggest that God is pleased that sin demands death, and that His Son had to die to save lost sinners. Rather, it indicates that the death of Christ satisfies the holy law of God and therefore is acceptable and pleasing to the Father. The sweet-savor offerings are described in Leviticus 1–3; the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering. The burnt offering pictures Christ’s complete devotion to God; the meal offering, His perfection of character; and the peace offering, His making peace between sinners and God. Since the sin offering and the trespass offering (Lev. 4–5) picture Christ taking the place of the sinner, they are not considered “sweet-savor” offerings. Certainly nothing is beautiful about sin!

Paul begins with “walk in love” because love is the fundamental factor in the Christian life. If we walk in love, we will not disobey God or injure men because “he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:8). The Holy Spirit puts this love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).

### **Walk As Children of Light (Eph. 5:3–14)**

Since “God is light” and we are imitating our Father, then we should walk in the light and have nothing to do with the darkness of sin. Paul gives three descriptions of believers that prove his point.

***We are saints (vv. 3–4).*** That is, we are “set-apart ones” and no longer belong to the world of darkness around us. We have been “called out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). It is beneath the dignity of a saint to indulge in the sins that belong to the world of darkness, some of which Paul names here. He warns us against the sexual sins (fornication, uncleanness) which were so prevalent in that day—and are prevalent today. Sad to say, these sins have invaded the homes of Christians and brought grief to local churches too. “Covetousness” may seem out of place next to fornication, but the two sins are but different expressions of the same basic weakness of fallen nature—uncontrolled appetite. The fornicator and the covetous person each desire to satisfy the appetite by taking what does not belong to them. “The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes” (1 John 2:16) would describe these two sins. “Let there not be even a hint of these sins!” said Paul.

In Ephesians 5:4 he warned against sins of the tongue, which, of course, are really sins of the heart. It is not difficult to see the relationship between the sins named in Ephesians 5:3 and those in Ephesians 5:4. People who have base appetites usually cultivate a base kind of speech and humor, and often people who want to commit sexual sins, or have committed them, enjoy jesting about them. Two indications of a person's character are what makes him laugh and what makes him weep. The saint of God sees nothing humorous in obscene language or jests. "Foolish talking" does not mean innocent humor but rather senseless conversation that cheapens the man and does not edify or minister grace to the hearers (Eph. 4:29). Paul is not condemning small talk because much conversation falls into that classification. He is condemning foolish talk that accomplishes no good purpose.

*Jesting* is a translation of a word that means "able to turn easily." This suggests a certain kind of conversationalist who can turn any statement into a coarse jest. The gift of wit is a blessing, but when it is attached to a filthy mind or a base motive, it becomes a curse. There are quick-witted people who can pollute any conversation with jests that are always inconvenient (out of place). How much better it is for us to be quick to give thanks! This is certainly the best way to give glory to God and keep the conversation pure.

A Christian woman attended an anniversary dinner in honor of a friend, not knowing that there would be a program of low comedy following the meal. The so-called comedian tried to entertain the crowd with coarse humor that degraded everything that the Christian guest held to be sacred and honorable. At one point in the program, the comedian's throat became dry. "Please bring me a glass of water," he called to a waiter.

At that point the Christian woman added, "And bring a toothbrush and a bar of soap with it!" To be sure, soap in the mouth will never cleanse the conversation, but she made her point.

Christians who have God's Word in their hearts (Col. 3:16) will always season their speech with salt (Col. 4:6); for grace in the heart means grace on the lips.

***We are kings (vv. 5–6).*** When we trusted Christ, we entered into the kingdom of God (John 3:3); but we are also awaiting the full revelation of His kingdom when He returns (2 Tim. 4:1). Paul makes it clear that people who deliberately and persistently live in sin will not share in God's kingdom. "They which practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21, literal translation). "Whoremonger" is a translation of the Greek word  *pornos*, from which we get our word  *pornography*, and it means "one who practices fornication—illicit sex." The morally unclean and the covetous will join the fornicator in judgment. Paul equates covetousness with idolatry, for it is the worship of something other than God. These warnings deal with the habitual practice of sin, and not the occasional act of sin. David committed adultery, yet God forgave him and one day took him to heaven. Certainly, David was disciplined for his sin, but he was not rejected by God.

In Paul's day, there were false Christians who argued that believers could live in sin and get away with it. These deceivers had many arguments to convince ignorant Christians that they could sin repeatedly and still enter God's kingdom. "You were saved by grace!" they argued. "Therefore, go ahead and sin that God's grace might abound!" Paul answered that foolish argument in Romans 6. "Sin in the life of a believer is different from sin in the life of an unsaved person!" Yes—*it's worse!* God judges sin no matter where He finds it, and He does not want to find it in the life of one of His own children. I personally believe that no true Christian can ever be lost, but he will prove the reality of his faith by an obedient life.

There are many professors who are not possessors (Matt. 7:21–23). A Christian is not *sinless*, but he does *sin less*—and less—and less! The Christian is a king, and it is beneath his dignity to indulge in the practices of the lost world that is outside the kingdom of God.

**We are light (vv. 7–14).** This figure is the main thrust of the passage, for Paul was admonishing his readers to “walk as children of light.” You will want to read 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 for a parallel passage that explains the contrasts that exist between the child of God and the unsaved person. Paul did not say that we were “in the darkness,” but that we “were darkness.” Now that we are saved, “what communion hath light with darkness?” After all, light produces fruit, but the works of darkness are unfruitful as far as spiritual things are concerned. “For the fruit of the Spirit [or “the light”] is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.” It is impossible to be in darkness and light at the same time!

The light produces “goodness,” one manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Goodness is “love in action.” Righteousness means rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before men. Both of these qualities are based on *truth*, which is conformity to the Word and will of God.

Jesus had much to say about light and darkness. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). “Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3:20–21).

To “walk as children of light” means to live before the eyes of God, not hiding anything. It is relatively easy to hide things from other people because they cannot see our hearts and minds; but “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). Every time I take a plane to a meeting, I must surrender myself and my luggage to a special inspection, and I am happy to do so, because this inspection helps to detect bombs. I have never been afraid to walk through the “detection tunnel” or have my luggage pass through the X-ray equipment, because I have nothing to hide.

An author asked Charles Spurgeon for permission to write his life story, and the great preacher replied, “You may write my life in the skies—I have nothing to hide!”

But walking “as children of light” also means revealing God’s light in our daily lives. By our character and conduct, we bring God’s light into a dark world. As God’s lights, we help others find their way to Christ. The mind of the unsaved person is blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:3–4) and by sin (Eph. 4:17–19). Only as we witness and share Christ can the light enter in. Just as a healthy person can assist the sickly, so a child of God can lead the lost out of darkness into God’s wonderful light.

Light reveals God; light produces fruit; but light also exposes what is wrong. No surgeon would willingly operate in darkness lest he made a false move and take a life. How could an artist paint a true picture in darkness? The light reveals the truth and exposes the true character of things. This explains why the unsaved person stays clear of the church and the Bible. God’s light reveals his true character, and the exposure is not very complimentary. As we Christians walk in light, we refuse to fellowship with the darkness, and we expose the dark things of sin for what they really are.

“I am come a light into the world,” said Jesus (John 12:46). He also said to His disciples, “Ye are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). When He was here on earth, the perfection of His character and conduct exposed the sinfulness of those around Him. This is one reason why the religious leaders hated Him and sought to destroy Him. “If I had not come and spoken unto

them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin” (John 15:22). Just as a healthy person unconsciously exposes the handicaps and sicknesses of people he visits in a hospital, so the Christian exposes the darkness and sin around him just by living like a Christian. Paul tells us to live balanced lives—positively, to walk in the light; negatively, to denounce and expose the wickedness of those in the darkness. It is not enough simply to expose the wickedness of those in the darkness. It is not enough simply to expose sin. We must also bear fruit.

But Ephesians 5:12 gives us a caution. Be careful how you deal with the “unfruitful works of darkness.” The motto today seems to be, “Tell it like it is!” And yet that can be a dangerous policy when it comes to exposing the filthy things of darkness, lest we unconsciously advertise and promote sin. Paul said, “It is a shame even to speak of those things” (Eph. 5:12). Some preachers enjoy reveling in the sensational, so much so that their sermons excite appetites and give to the innocent more information than they need. “But yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil” (Rom. 16:19).

I recall a friend in youth work who felt it necessary to read all that the teenagers were reading “in order to understand them better,” and it so polluted his mind that he himself fell into sin. It is not necessary for the believer to perform an autopsy on a rotting corpse to expose its rottenness. All he has to do is turn on the light! “For whatsoever doth make manifest is light” (Eph. 5:13).

When you think of light, you think of waking up to a new day, and Paul presented this picture (Eph. 5:14), paraphrasing Isaiah 60:1. You have the same image in Romans 13:11–13 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–10. That Easter morning, when Christ arose from the dead, was the dawning of a new day for the world. Christians are not sleeping in sin and death. We have been raised from the dead through faith in Him. The darkness of the graveyard is past, and we are now walking in the light of salvation. Salvation is the beginning of a new day, and we ought to live as those who belong to the light, not to the darkness. “Lazarus, come forth!”

The believer has no business in the darkness. He is a *saint*, which means he is a partaker “of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). He is a *king*, because he has been delivered “from the power of darkness” and has been translated “into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col. 1:13). He is “light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8).

### **Walk in Wisdom (Eph. 5:15–17)**

*Circumspect* comes from two Latin words which mean “looking around.” The Greek word carries the idea of precision and accuracy. “See that you walk carefully, with exactness” is the meaning. The opposite would be walking carelessly and without proper guidance and forethought. We cannot leave the Christian life to chance. We must make wise decisions and seek to do the will of God.

Ephesians 5:14–15 are related. Paul appeared to be saying, “Don’t walk in your sleep! Wake up! Open your eyes! Make the most of the day!” It is sad to see many professed Christians “drift” through life, like sleepwalkers, who never really make the most of opportunities to live for Christ and serve Him. Paul presented several reasons why we should be accurate and careful in our walk.

***It is a mark of wisdom (v. 15).*** Only a fool drifts with the wind and tide. A wise man marks out his course, sets his sails, and guides the rudder until he reaches his destination. When a man wants to build a house, he first draws his plans so he knows what he is doing. Yet, how many Christians plan their days so that they use their opportunities wisely? True, we cannot know what a day may bring forth (James 4:13–17). But it is also true that a planned life can better deal with

unexpected events. Someone said, “When the pilot does not know what port he is heading for, no wind is the right wind.”

**Life is short (v. 16a).** “Buying up the opportunity—taking advantage of it.” An old Chinese adage says, “Opportunity has a forelock so you can seize it when you meet it. Once it is past, you cannot seize it again.” Our English word *opportunity* comes from the Latin and means “toward the port.” It suggests a ship taking advantage of the wind and tide to arrive safely in the harbor. The brevity of life is a strong argument for making the best use of the opportunities God gives us.

**The days are evil (v. 16b).** In Paul’s time, this meant that Roman persecution was on the way (1 Peter 4:12–19). How foolish to waste opportunities to win the lost when soon those opportunities might be taken away by the advances of sin in society! If the days were evil when Paul wrote this letter, what must be their condition today?

**God has given us a mind (v. 17a).** “Understanding” suggests using our minds to discover and do the will of God. Too many Christians have the idea that discovering God’s will is a mystical experience that rules out clear thinking. But this idea is wrong—and dangerous. We discover the will of God as He transforms the mind (Rom. 12:1–2); and this transformation is the result of the Word of God, prayer, meditation, and worship. If God gave you a mind, then He expects you to use it. This means that learning His will involves gathering facts, examining them, weighing them, and praying for His wisdom (James 1:5). God does not want us simply to *know* His will; He wants us to *understand* His will.

**God has a plan for our lives (v. 17b).** Paul alluded to this plan (Eph. 2:10). If God saved me, He has a purpose for my life, and I should discover that purpose and then guide my life accordingly. He reveals His plan through His Word (Col. 1:9–10), His Spirit in our hearts (Col. 3:15), and the working of circumstances (Rom. 8:28). The Christian can walk carefully and accurately because he knows what God wants him to do. Like the builder following the blueprint, he accomplishes what the architect planned.

This completes the section we have called “Walk in Purity.” The emphasis is on the new life as contrasted with the old life, imitating God and not the evil world around us. In the next section, “Walk in Harmony,” Paul deals with the relationships of life and shows how life in Christ can bring heaven to the home.

**Hoehner, H. W. (1985). *Ephesians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 637-640) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

### C. Walking in love (5:1–6)

In applying his doctrines, Paul now for the third time used the term for “walk” (*peripateō*, translated “live” in the NIV; 4:1, 17; 5:2). This is thus the third section in his discussion on the conduct of believers. God’s children are to walk (live) in unity, in holiness, and in love.

#### 1. THE POSITIVE: TO LOVE OTHERS (5:1–2).

5:1–2. Each Christian should **be** an imitator **of God** because he is God’s child. As a child imitates his parents, so ought a believer to imitate God (cf. Matt. 5:48; Luke 6:36).

The **and** should be translated “that is” in order to convey the idea that Ephesians 5:2 explains how a believer is to imitate God: by walking in **love**. The supreme example of this love is

Christ's love for His own—He **loved us**; seen graphically in His sacrificing His life on behalf of those who would believe. He willingly **gave Himself up** (cf. v. 25; John 10:11, 15, 17–18; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 9:14). This **offering** was a fragrance pleasing (and thus acceptable) **to God** (cf. Lev. 1:17; 3:16; Isa. 53:10). (The idea of **fragrant** offerings is also spoken of in 2 Cor. 2:15–16; Phil. 4:18.) Christians can imitate God by loving others, even to the point of death if necessary (1 John 3:16).

## 2. THE NEGATIVE: TO ABSTAIN FROM EVIL (5:3–6).

### a. *Responsibility: to abstain from evil practices (5:3–4).*

5:3. The self-centered vices in conduct and speech (vv. 3–4) are the opposite of the self-sacrificing love spoken of in verses 1–2. Since these vices portray selfishness and unconcern for others, a believer should **not** have **even a hint of** these sins in his life. **Sexual immorality** (*porneia*), **any kind of impurity**, and greed **are improper for** (lit., “should not be named among”) believers. **God's holy people** is literally, “saints” (*hagiois*; cf. 1:1, 15).

5:4. Improprieties in speech—**obscenity** (*aischrotēs*, “shameless talk and conduct”), **foolish talk** (*mōrologia*, lit., “stupid words”), and **coarse jesting** (*eutrapelia*, “vulgar, frivolous wit”)—**are out of place** for Jesus' followers, because such vices often harm (cf. 4:29), whereas **thanksgiving** is appreciation for others and is helpful. Paul was not intimating that humor itself is sin, but that it is wrong when it is used to destroy or tear down others.

### b. *Reason: no inheritance for evildoers (5:5–6).*

5:5–6. Paul sternly warned believers that the reason they are to abstain from evil deeds (specifically, immorality, impurity, and greed; cf. vv. 3 and 5) is that those who practice them are not a part of God's kingdom. Those who have no **inheritance in the kingdom** have not been “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified” as 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 so clearly demonstrates. A **greedy person ... is an idolater** (cf. Col. 3:5) in the sense that greed, like idols, puts things before God.

Christians should not be deceived into thinking that this warning is merely **empty words** (*kenois*, translated “empty” means void of content), for the **disobedient**, that is, the unregenerate (cf. Eph. 2:2) are the objects of **God's wrath** (cf. Col. 3:6). God's view of sin should be taken seriously. Believers should be imitators of God, not evildoers.

## D. *Walking in light (5:7–14)*

The reason for dividing the outline here rather than between verses 5 and 6 (or between vv. 7 and 8) is because of the resumptive inferential particle (*oun*, “therefore”) that marks the beginning of each new section: 4:1, 17; 5:1, 7, 15.

### 1. NOT BECOMING INVOLVED WITH EVILDOERS (5:7–10)

#### a. *Command: do not get involved (5:7).*

5:7. Christians, as objects of God's love (vv. 1–2), are inconsistent if they become **partners with** those who are the objects of God's wrath, those who are not “in the kingdom” (v. 5).



b. *Reason: Christians are changed persons (5:8a).*

5:8a. The reason (*gar*, **for**) believers should not be partners with the unregenerate is that Christians are no longer part of the **darkness**, in which they used to live (cf. 4:18; John 1:5; 3:19–20) **but ... are light in the Lord** (Matt. 5:14–16; John 3:21; 8:12; Rom. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:4–5). They have been rescued out of darkness (Col. 1:13). Now, being “in the Lord,” who is the Light (John 8:12), they too are lights.

c. *Command: walk as children of light (5:8b–10).*

5:8b–10. The behavior of saints should correspond with their positions. Since they are **children of light**, that is, since their very nature is spiritual light, they are to **live** accordingly (Rom. 13:12). Ephesians 5:9 parenthetically explains that **the fruit of the light**—which is **goodness, righteousness** (cf. Phil. 1:11), **and truth**—reflects God’s character in a believer’s life. (The KJV rendering, “fruit of the Spirit,” lacks good textual support.) Sinners, those in darkness, are characterized by the opposite of this fruit: evil, wickedness, and falsehood. The thought in verse 10 expands on verse 8b in that to live as children of light one must discern **what pleases the Lord** (cf. 2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10). The words **find out** translate *dokimazontes*, which is literally, “putting to the test,” “approving,” or “discerning” (cf. Rom. 12:2).

2. NOT BECOMING INVOLVED WITH EVILDOERS’ WORKS (5:11–13)

Those who profess Christ are to walk in light by not being partners with unbelievers (vv. 7–10). Now Paul mentioned that Christians are not to be involved with unbelievers’ deeds (vv. 11–13).

a. *Command: do not get involved but expose (5:11).*

5:11. Christians are forbidden to be “sharers together” (*synmetochoi*, v. 7; cf. *metochoi* in Heb. 1:9 [“companions”]; 3:1, 14 [“share”]; 6:4 [“shared”]) with the sons of disobedience; now they are told not to take part (*synkoinōneite*) with unbelievers’ actions. Their ways are **fruitless deeds of darkness** in contrast with “the fruit of the light” (Eph. 5:9). Sins bear no “fruit”; they give no benefits to oneself or others.

Christians, by conducting themselves as “children of light,” **expose** the “deeds of darkness.” These deeds, however, refer here to the deeds of other believers who are not walking in the light. This is because only God can expose and convict unbelievers’ deeds (1 Cor. 5:12–13). Believers, on the other hand, can expose evil deeds among other Christians within the church. This the Corinthians failed to do (1 Cor. 5).

b. *Reason: their works are shameful (5:12).*

5:12. The things done **in secret** are too **shameful even** to talk about. The term **the disobedient** in the NIV wrongly suggests that this refers to unbelievers. However, the Greek has “what is done *by them*,” thus indicating that Paul may be referring to believers who commit “deeds of darkness.”

c. *Explanation: light shows the true character of works (5:13).*

5:13. When **light** exposes evil deeds, they become **visible**, manifest for what they really are. Seeing them as evil, a believer then cleanses himself of them (1 John 1:5–7), realizing they are detrimental not only to him but also to other believers.

### 3. CONCLUSION: ENLIGHTENMENT OF CHRIST (5:14)

5:14. The introductory formula, **This is why it is said**, seems to indicate a quotation from the Old Testament, but it is difficult to identify unless it is a combination of passages (e.g., Isa. 26:19; 51:17; 52:1; 60:1). Possibly it is a quotation from an early Christian hymn. A believer who has committed “deeds of darkness,” is to **wake up** and **rise from the dead** since he was involved with the deeds of evildoers. Christ’s shining on him speaks of His approval, an indication that he is discerning and following what is pleasing to the Lord (Eph. 5:10).

Therefore verses 7–14 deal with church discipline. Believers are to walk in the **light**, and in so doing to expose other believers of any works that are unfruitful so that they too may walk in the light and please their Lord.

#### *E. Walking in wisdom (5:15–6:9)*

For a fifth time Paul used the word “walk” (*peripateō*), translated “live” in the NIV (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). Here Paul instructed believers to be wise in their walk or conduct by being filled by the Holy Spirit.

#### 1. ADMONITION (5:15–21)

##### *a. Proper action: to walk wisely (5:15–16).*

5:15–16. The NIVs **Be very careful, then, how you live** is literally, “Look therefore carefully how you walk.” Does the adverb “carefully” (*akribōs*, lit. “accurately”) modify “look”? If so the first clause in verse 15 could be translated, “Therefore look carefully how you walk.” (This is behind the rendering in the ASV, NASB, and NIV.) Or does “careful” modify “walk”? If so, the idea is, “Therefore look that you walk carefully” (cf. KJV). This second alternative is preferred because better Greek manuscripts place *akribōs* closer to the Greek word “walk” and because in the New Testament the Greek imperative “look” (*blepete*) is never modified by an adverb. Believers then, are to walk (**live**) carefully, so as to be **wise** or skillful and thus please the Lord. The *manner* for this careful, precise walk is **making the right use of every opportunity** (cf. Col. 4:5), and the *reason* for this careful walk is that **the days are evil**. Many are walking in sin, and since the time is short believers must make full use of their time to help turn them from darkness to light. This necessitates wise conduct.

##### *b. Proper state: to become wise (5:17–21).*

5:17. Rather than being **foolish** (*aphrones*, “senseless”) or “unwise” (*asophoi*, v. 15), Christians are to **understand** (*syniete*, “comprehend intellectually”) **what the Lord’s will is**. Only after one understands what pleases God (v. 1) can he carry it out in his life.

**Fields, W. C. (1972). *Ephesians*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary* (p. 747). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.**

Chapter 5 continues with social ethics guidelines. The subject shifts from internal relationships of the church to ethics in a society that is alien to God and hostile to God's children. In 5:1–21 Paul lists the kinds of things that should characterize the believer. They are intended to be part of a contrasting life-style to the pagan world. Paul does not call for isolation from the world, however. This would contradict the missionary imperative each believer has. But he does call for differentness in manner of life.

Marriage and home relationships should be affected by the Christian way of life. He suggests some practical out-workings of their faith in the man-wife relationships (vv. 22–32). He finds a good illustration for his purpose in the ties which bind Christ and the church.

**Anders, M. (1999). Galatians-Colossians (Vol. 8, pp. 170–172). Broadman & Holman Publishers.**

#### **A. The Imitation of God (vv. 1–2)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Imitate God, just as Jesus did, living a life of sacrifice to God.*

**5:1.** Just as it is natural for an earthly child to imitate his earthly father, so should the spiritual child imitate his Heavenly Father. The word *imitate* comes from the word *mimeomai*, from which we get our word *mimic*. It means “to act like.”

**5:2.** To imitate God in this context means to walk in love. Love denies self. It is willing to give up self-interest for God's sake. Since Jesus **gave himself up for us**, we ought to give ourselves up for him. To *give oneself up* means “to follow, to obey, to live in relationship with.” When we live with this attitude toward God, we please him just as a pleasant aroma pleases the one who smells it (see Lev. 1:17; 3:16; Isa. 53:10). Jesus became the sacrifice for our sins. We must become a living sacrifice, obeying him (see Rom. 12:1).

#### **B. The Avoidance of Sin (vv. 3–14)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *You should stop committing evil sins, which bring the wrath of God on people, since those are the deeds of darkness, and you are children of light.*

**5:3–4.** The opposite of imitating God and giving oneself up for him is living in **sexual immorality, impurity, and greed** (note the same Greek words for *impurity* and *greed* in 4:19). Paul says that it is not proper for these things even to be named among the children of God. These are sins of “deed.” In addition to sinful deeds, there ought not to be sinful “words.” **Obscenity, foolish talk, coarse joking** ought not be part of the speech patterns of Christians. Rather, we ought to speak from a heart of thankfulness to God.

**5:5–7.** Paul warns the Ephesian Christians not to engage in the activities of **those who are disobedient**. It might be possible to infer that if Christians engaged in these activities (immorality, impurity, covetousness) they would lose their salvation. That is not Paul's point. Paul is saying that we are not to do these things because we are no longer **those who are disobedient**. Since we are not part of them anymore, we should **not be partners with them**. It is not a matter of salvation in this instance but a matter of identification. We are not like them anymore; therefore, we ought not to live like them. If we are partners with them, we are

forewarned. Such people do not share the kingdom inheritance. Rather, they endure divine wrath. No fine theological arguments can get around that simple truth.

**5:8–10.** It would be a gross inconsistency for a Christian to participate in the flagrant sins of non-Christians. The Ephesian Christians were once just like those who are disobedient. But no longer! Rather than doing deeds of immorality, impurity, and greed, they should do deeds of **goodness, righteousness, and truth**. Christians are no longer **darkness**, but **children of light**. Therefore, we should do deeds of light, not darkness. Only as you walk in God’s light can you please him.

**5:11–14.** Not only ought we not to do the same sins as those who are disobedient, but we should try to expose them. Paul may be referring to exposing the sins of church members, because the church is responsible to hold its members accountable for their lifestyles. If a Christian lives in flagrant, unrepentant sin, the church is to try to get them to turn from their sin (Matt. 18:15–20; Gal. 6:1).

The context is dealing with the disobedient. This would indicate that the church should attempt to expose the sins of the non-Christian, which would be a full-time job if done very thoroughly. Society’s major sins certainly need to be exposed.

Sins are exposed by shining light into sin’s darkness. An amazing thing happens. Darkness can no longer hide its nature and acts in secret. All is exposed to light. Light that **makes everything visible** brings an even more radical element. Literally, this reads, everything that is revealed is (or becomes) light. Light turns darkness into light. This is the church’s mission. Whether the people in darkness are church members or society members, the goal is to transform them completely from darkness to light.

The poetic passage in verse 14 may be a quote from an ancient hymn based on Scripture. It is not a direct scriptural quotation. A person who was participating in the **deeds of darkness** is to wake up and **rise from the dead**, meaning to turn from those deeds. **Christ will shine on you** may mean that Christ is pleased with the person who turns from such deeds. He is light and the source of their light. His shining light exposes all their darkness and transforms them into light.

### C. The Filling of the Spirit (vv. 15–21)

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Allow the Holy Spirit to direct your behavior, which will result in mutual ministry and submission.*

**5:15–17.** The world in which we live is filled with dangers and deceptions. It is not always easy to live an enlightened life even when we want to. We can get tripped up or ambushed by events and people without even being aware of the danger. We must be very careful to live our life rooted in wisdom, using our time wisely. Not to do so would be foolish. The will of the Lord is that we live carefully, cautiously, always matching our lifestyle with the teachings of Scripture.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Ephesians 5:1-17). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**