

BE LIGHT: FOLLOW GOD & CHRIST

Ephesians 5.1-2: Walk as a child of light—as God (godly) and as Christ (Christian).

Theme: Being light in this dark world begins with being like God (godly) & walking like Christ (Christian).

Remember where we are in our study of Ephesians: The practical chapters.

- (Eph 1-3) In the first half of the book, Paul laid a solid doctrinal foundation of what we have "in Christ."
 1. (Eph 1) We have a news beginning (v3: all spiritual blessing).
 2. (Eph 2) We have a big change (v1: death to life; v13: far to near).
 3. (Eph 3) We have a new Apostle (v8: we following Christ by following Paul).
- (Eph 4-6) Now, in the second half of Ephesians, Paul teaches us how we are to live (practically) in Christ.
 1. (Eph 4) We are to walk worth (v1) of our new "job" (v12: the mission) by walking in the new man.
 2. (Eph 5) We are to walk as children of light...

Ephesians 5: The central theme of this chapter is seen in verse 8...

- Since we are light in the Lord (what He made us at salvation), we ought to live (walk) like it in the world.
- We spent a lot of time in chapter 4 talking about our mission, the work of the ministry that God gave us to do (v12: building up the Body of Christ through evangelism and edification—discipleship).
- In chapter 5 that focus is still on the mission, but here we see that Paul more specifically begins to address our lifestyles (how we live) so that we might be light in addition to preaching the light of the Gospel.
 - ✓ (Titus 2.10) It's to say that Ephesians 5 focuses more on adorning the Gospel with your lifestyle.

(Mat 5.14-16) Our "good works" as believers (what we do in our day-to-day lives) is "light" in this world.

- Obviously God Himself is the Light—Jesus Christ is the light that lighteth every man in this world.
- We have no "light" of our own, but rather (like the moon) we simply reflect (manifest) the light of God.
- (Eph 5.1-2) That is why this chapter on walking as children of light begins with an exhortation to be like God (v1: godly) and to walk like Christ (v2: like a "Christian").

I. (v1) Follow God: Be Like Him (willingly, gladly, joyfully)

A. The Transition: "...therefore..."

1. Don't miss the connection between chapter 4 and chapter 5. The "therefore" is there for a reason: To draw our attention to what was said before, and build on that.
2. (Eph 4.30) We strive to live in a way that we never grieve God in any way. That means we should strive to always do that which pleases Him.
3. "Therefore...": We should live/walk like Paul lays out in chapter 5 (and later in chapter 6).

B. The Transformation: "...be followers of God..."

1. Not enough could be said about the importance of this concept of "following" in Paul's writings.
 - a) If you haven't noticed, Paul does not use the term **disciple** in his writings. Rather, Paul uses **follower** instead. There are good reasons for that...
 - b) One principal reason for the change: Jesus Christ is not physically on earth for us to follow (see and "imitate") Him as His **disciples** did in the Gospels.
 - That change alone necessitated a change in how we learn to be disciples of the Lord.

2. We are called to be *followers/imitators* of God.
 - a) The term we use for someone who follows God to be like God is *godly* (it is someone who is conformed to His image—the image of God—that was marred in the Fall because of sin).
 - (1) This is the same concept we see in the term *Christian*. We are to be Christ-like (like Christ), and the Bible term for that is *Christian* (literally: little-Christ / imitators).
 - (2) Just as we are to follow God to be godly and see His image complete resorted in us, so we are to follow Christ so we can be Christians as be conformed to His image.
 - b) How do we actually *do* this, though? How do we follow or imitate God as His "apprentices"?
3. (Isa 55.8-11) First and foremost, we follow God by following the revelation He gave us to follow.
 - a) We find God's specific and special revelation of Himself and His will in the Scripture. We need to read the Bible and be familiar with its contents, so we can follow/imitate God who wrote it.
 - b) And with Scripture we see the concept of *following/imitating* others who are following God.
4. (1Cor 4.16; 11.1) Here we see a key concept in Pauline Discipleship during the Church Age: To be followers of God (of Christ) today, we need to follow/imitate Paul (and those who followed him).
 - a) Why is that? (2Cor 5.16) Because we do not follow Christ "after the flesh" (i.e., according to His ministry "in the flesh" that we see prior to Paul, in the Gospels).
 - b) (Php 4.9) We are to learn...
 - (1) ...from what Paul taught (what we learn from him by hearing his words through Scripture),
 - (2) ...from how Paul lived (what we have received from him in the example of what he did).
 - c) We cannot fulfill the will of God as expressed in Ephesians 5.1 (be followers of God—godly) without following Paul in his example of following Christ.
 - To follow Christ as He is portrayed in the Gospels ("in the flesh") is to apply doctrine and examples from another dispensation (Israel's time under the Law of Moses) to our dispensation (the Church's time under grace). And that will lead to improper application.
5. Summary: (1Thes 1.6) To be followers of God, we need to do two specific things...
 - a) We need to receive the Word of God (Scripture), and...
 - b) We need to follow the example of Paul that we see in Scripture (and the example of those who were and are following Paul in his ministry lifestyle).
 - c) Spend time reading the Bible and making it a part of you and your life, and then follow/imitate Paul's works—what he did, his life, his lifestyle, his walk with the Lord.
 - d) And that brings us to the final point of study in Ephesians 5.1...

C. The Decision: "...as dear children..."

1. We should strive to be followers of God (godly, Christ-like, "Christians!") as *dear* children, not as rebellious, spoiled, ungrateful children.
 - a) The "dear" child loves his Father and wants to please Him in all things (remember the "therefore" in Ephesians 5.1 that points us back to "grieve not" in Ephesians 4.30).
 - b) And that is exactly how God wants us to be: Followers/Imitators of Him (our Heavenly Father) willingly, gladly, and joyfully!
2. And that is our own personal decision. We decide if we want to be like our Father (godly) or not.
 - a) God's desire is clearly seen in the word *be*: It's an imperative (a command).
 - b) God expects all of His children to follow Him in order to be like Him: Children of Light.

D. Review: (v1) In order to *be* light in this dark world (children of light, children of God who is Light), we *have* to *be* like God (godly, Christ-like, "Christians").

1. And that means we must *be* followers of God, not just "church-goers." We need to be godly!
2. And He has not left us without clear instruction (Scripture) and practical examples (Paul).
3. Therefore, it all boils down to this: What do you want to be when you grow up? Do you want to be like your Father? or do you have other plans? The *dear* child wants to be like (*follow*) his Father.

II. (v2) **Follow Christ: *Walk* Like Him**

- If we want to *be* followers of God, then we need to *walk* like Christ...

A. ***Walk* is also an Imperative—a Command**

1. Just like God said, "Be!" in verse 1, He also says, "Walk!" in verse 2. This is God's will and desire for each and every one of us (because this is His command to each and every one of us).
2. Remember what we've seen thus far in Ephesians about your *walk*: Your "walk" is your lifestyle—your constant, step-by-step moving through this life.
3. And God wants our lifestyles as followers of Him to be marked by *love*, the same love we see manifest in Christ (i.e., God wants us to follow/imitate Christ and love like He did).

B. (Mat 22.34-40) **All that God expects of us can be summarized in these two commands to *love*.**

1. We should *walk* in love for God: (John 14.21, 23-24; 15.10) That means we should develop a lifestyle of learning and obeying Scripture, God's Word.
 - a) (John 8.29) That kind of lifestyle is *walking in love as Christ*, because He loved us and lived the perfectly obedient life we could never live.
 - b) That should be our goal (our pattern or model to "follow/imitate"): To love God and walk according to His desires always, in everything... like Christ (like Christians)!
2. We should *walk* in love for our neighbor: (Luke 10.25-39) The story of the "good" Samaritan shows us how to love our neighbor...
 - a) (v25-29) The story that follows illustrates the second greatest commandment to love our neighbor in a godly/Christ-like fashion.
 - b) (v30) We have a man in need (he is a stranger; he's just some guy out on the streets).
 - c) (v31-32) Most people today are just like these two guys: They are religious (church-goers), but they have no love for those in need—they don't care about the dire need of those around them.
 - d) (v33-35) The Samaritan was different...
 - (1) He gave, first, of himself: He chose to love the man in need (to show mercy and kindness).
 - (2) He gave, next, of what he had: He chose to give of his oil, wine, money, and time.
 - (a) God will never ask you to give what you cannot—to give what you do not have.
 - (b) God simply asks us to do what we can with what we have during the time allotted.
 - e) (v36-37) And that is how we love our neighbor in a Christ-like fashion:
 - (1) We choose to stop (the hectic, rat-race lives we lead) and see the need...
 - (2) We choose to be merciful and kind to those who are in need...
 - (3) We choose to do what we can with what we have in order to meet that need.

- f) Think about the "neighbor" God has placed in our path at this point in time: Johnson County.
- (1) What is the greatest need our neighbor has? What do we have and what can we do in order to meet that need?
 - (2) I could be wrong... but, I am becoming more and more convinced that the greatest need our neighbor has is the need for the message of *true and false conversions*. So many in our community are church-goers, but so few are Christians (followers/imitators of Christ).
 - (3) The question again: What can we do with what God has give us in order to meet that need?

Remember our purpose in life: To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

1. To glorify God: (Eph 5.2b) To follow/imitate God (to strive to be godly; v1) and to follow/imitate Christ in His life/walk (to strive to be "Christian": to love God and love our neighbor; v2a) results in a sweet-smelling savour to God—it pleases (glorifies) Him!
2. To enjoy Him: (John 15.10-13) To follow God and Christ is also the key to enjoying Him now and forever. For the true believer, to *not* follow God and Christ results in miserable frustration, because we were made in Christ to love God and love our neighbor—that is our life's mission (why we're here; these are the works for which God created us a new in Jesus Christ; Eph 2.10).

Ephesians 5 teaches us that God wants us to be light in this dark world.

- That requires that we *speak* (preach the Gospel and the truth of God's Word), but that also means we need to *adorn* the Gospel message with a godly and Christ-like lifestyle (Eph 5.8).
- (v1) Follow God to *be* like Him—to be godly (willingly, gladly, joyfully).
 - ✓ Spend time in the Bible and spend time following (imitating) godly examples God put in your life.
- (v2) Follow Christ to *walk* like Him (in love—biblical love!).
 - ✓ Love God: Learn of Him; submit to Him; obey Him.
 - ✓ Love your neighbor: See his need and choose to do something to meet that need.
 - ✓ That's what it means to be a "Christian": One who follows/imitates Christ (Paul shows you the way).

To be light in this world, we need to *be* different (godly!) and we need to *walk* differently (as Christians!).

- That's how we glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
- Because that's how we accomplish our mission of being and making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.