

Ephesians - Fullness: Walk This Way

Dr. John Carmichael

[Eph 5:1-2, 8, 15 NASB95] 1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. ... 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ... 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,

- Throughout Ephesians, Paul repeatedly uses the word “walk” to describe the Christian life.
- We once “walked” according to the course of this world (Ephesians 2:2).
- We were created in Christ to “walk” in good works (Ephesians 2:10).
- We are commanded to “walk” worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1).
- We must no longer “walk” as the Gentiles walk (Ephesians 4:17).
- Now we are told to walk in love, light, and wisdom.
- Your walk is the repeated pattern of your life. It is not one emotional moment at the altar. It is how you live on Monday after worshiping on Sunday.
- Anybody can take one good step. Discipleship is continuing to walk with Jesus.
- Paul is not merely saying, “Believe the right things.” He is saying, “Let what you believe transform how you behave.”
- Grace does not merely change our destination when we die; grace changes our direction while we live!

How should people who have been saved by Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit walk in a world filled with darkness?

Paul gives us three unmistakable commands: walk in love, walk in light, and walk in wisdom.

- I. Walk in Love - [Eph 5:1-7 NASB95] 1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. 3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and [there must be no] filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them;**
 - a. Walking in love means that the sacrificial love of Jesus becomes the pattern for our relationships and the governing influence over our desires.
 - b. Holy Love.
 - c. Imitate Your Father - “Be imitators of God, as beloved children” (v. 1).
 - i. Children naturally imitate what they see. Paul tells us to imitate God, not the surrounding culture.
 - ii. We do not imitate God to become His children. We imitate Him because, through Christ, we already are His beloved children.
 - iii. Identity comes before imitation.
 - iv. The world should be able to see something of the Father by watching the lives of His children.
 - v. If you carry the family name, you ought to show the family resemblance!

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- d. Follow the Example of Jesus - "Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us" (v. 2).
 - i. Biblical love is not merely an emotion. It is self-giving action.
 - ii. Jesus did not simply say that He loved us. He gave Himself for us. His love was costly, sacrificial, and redemptive.
 - iii. Paul describes Christ's sacrifice as "an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." Jesus offered Himself to the Father for our salvation.
 - iv. Walking in love means asking: What can I give rather than what can I get? How can I serve rather than demand to be served? How can I demonstrate Christ's love to someone who cannot repay me?
 - v. Love is not proven by what we feel when everything is easy. Love is proven by what we give when love becomes costly.
- e. Refuse the Counterfeits of Love
 - i. Paul immediately contrasts Christlike love with immorality, impurity, and greed (vv. 3–5).
 - ii. That is intentional. The world often calls lust "love," but lust and love move in opposite directions.
 - iii. Love gives; lust takes. Love honors; lust uses. Love protects; lust exploits. Love seeks another person's good; lust seeks personal gratification.
 - iv. Sexual immorality takes what God designed to be holy and uses it outside His will. Greed turns desire into a master that always demands more.
 - v. Paul says these things must not even be named among the saints "as is proper among saints" (v. 3). "Saints" means holy ones—people who have been set apart for God.
 - vi. Holiness is not an attempt to earn salvation. Holiness is the appropriate response of people who belong to Jesus.
- f. Change the Sound of Your Speech
 - i. Paul also confronts "filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting" (v. 4).
 - ii. What fills the heart eventually finds its way into the mouth. A transformed life should produce transformed speech.
 - iii. Instead of obscene, degrading, or foolish words, Paul commands believers to practice thanksgiving.
 - iv. When gratitude fills your heart, filth has less room in your mouth!
- g. Do Not Be Deceived by Empty Words - "Let no one deceive you with empty words." — Ephesians 5:6
 - i. There will always be voices saying that sin does not matter, holiness is outdated, and grace excuses unrepentant living. Paul calls those claims "empty words."
 - ii. Grace welcomes sinners, but grace does not leave us enslaved to sin.
 - iii. Paul is not saying that anyone who has ever committed these sins can never be saved. The gospel offers forgiveness and transformation. He is warning against a settled, unrepentant life dominated by sin.
 - iv. We cannot participate in the rebellion of the world while claiming to pursue the holiness of Christ.
- h. Application: Examine your definition of love. Is it shaped by Christ's sacrifice or by the culture's desires? Receive your identity as God's beloved child. You do not have to search for love in destructive places. Perform one deliberate act of sacrificial love this week without expecting recognition or repayment.
- i. If Jesus loved us enough to give Himself for us, we can love others enough to give something of ourselves!

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II. Walk in Light - [Eph 5:8-14 NASB95] 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light 9 (for the fruit of the Light [consists] in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. 14 For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."

- a. Notice that Paul does not merely say that we were "in" darkness. He says we "were darkness." But now, because of our union with Christ, we are "Light in the Lord."
- b. Jesus did not simply improve us. He changed what we are!
- c. Remember Who You Were - (v. 8).
 - i. We should never become proud of our transformation. Every believer has a "formerly."
 - ii. We remember where we came from—not to live under shame, but to remain amazed by grace.
 - iii. Do not judge people who are still standing in the darkness you needed Jesus to bring you out of!
- d. Recognize Who You Are - (v. 8).
 - i. Our identity changed because our relationship with Christ changed.
 - ii. We are not light because we are naturally good. We are light "in the Lord." Like the moon reflects the sun, believers reflect the glory of Jesus.
 - iii. Jesus said: "You are the light of the world." —Matthew 5:14
 - iv. The world does not need the Church to imitate its darkness. The world needs the Church to reveal another way to live.
 - v. Preaching declaration: God did not light you up so you could hide. He lit you up so somebody else could find the way home!
- e. Produce the Fruit of Light - (v. 9).
 - i. Light produces visible fruit: Goodness—doing what benefits others. Righteousness—living according to God's standard. Truth—being genuine, honest, and faithful.
 - ii. Spiritual experiences should produce spiritual fruit. We cannot claim to be full of the Spirit while consistently displaying the works of darkness.
 - iii. The evidence of light is not how loudly we shout inside the church. It is how faithfully we live outside the church.
- f. Discover What Pleases the Lord
 - i. Paul commands believers to be "trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord" (v. 10).
 - ii. The Christian question is not merely, "Is this technically sinful?"
 - iii. Mature Christianity stops asking, "How close can I get to sin?" and starts asking, "How close can I walk with Jesus?"
- g. Expose the Works of Darkness – (v. 11)
 - i. We expose darkness first by refusing to participate in it. Our lives should provide a visible contrast.
 - ii. But exposure must never become self-righteous humiliation. Our purpose is not to embarrass people; it is to bring people into freedom.
 - iii. Light does not argue with darkness. Light simply shines, and darkness loses its hiding place.

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- iv. This also requires personal honesty. Before we expose the darkness around us, we must allow the Holy Spirit to expose the darkness within us.
- v. [Psa 139:23 NASB95] 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
- h. Wake Up and Rise – (v. 14)
 - i. This sounds like an early Christian hymn or baptismal declaration. It is a call to spiritual awakening.
 - ii. Some people are alive physically but sleeping spiritually.
 - iii. But the Holy Spirit is sounding an alarm: Wake up! Get up! Step into the light!
 - iv. You do not have to remain in spiritual dullness. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead can awaken you again.
- i. Application: Evaluate your choices by what pleases the Lord, not merely by what society permits. Bring hidden shame into Christ's light. His light does not only expose; it heals and restores. Remove one habit, influence, or environment that repeatedly pulls you toward darkness.
- j. You were darkness, but now you are light—so wake up, rise up, and let Jesus shine through you!

III. Walk in Wisdom - [Eph 5:15-21 NASB95] 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; 21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

- a. Love governs our relationships. Light transforms our character. Wisdom directs our decisions.
- b. Walking in wisdom means living carefully, intentionally, and continually under the influence of the Holy Spirit.
- c. Watch Your Steps - (v. 15).
 - i. The word translated “careful” carries the idea of looking accurately or paying close attention.
 - ii. We are walking through spiritually dangerous territory. We cannot afford careless Christianity.
 - iii. Careless people ask, “What could possibly go wrong?”
 - iv. Wise people ask: Where will this decision lead? What will this choice produce? What could this cost my family? How will this affect my calling? Does this agree with God's Word?
 - v. You cannot walk carelessly and expect to arrive at God's intended destination.
 - vi. Direction, not intention, determines destination. Good intentions cannot rescue you from consistently walking in the wrong direction.
- d. Redeem Your Time – (v. 16)
 - i. The phrase “making the most” carries the idea of buying up every opportunity.
 - ii. Time is more valuable than money. You can lose money and earn it again, but you cannot recover yesterday.
 - iii. The days are evil, but that does not mean the Church should retreat in fear. Evil days create urgent opportunities for Spirit-filled believers.
 - iv. Do not waste your assignment waiting for perfect circumstances.

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- v. These may be evil days, but they can still become fruitful days when Spirit-filled people seize God-given opportunities!
- e. Understand the Lord's Will - (v. 17).
 - i. God's will is not meant to be a lifelong mystery. Much of His will has already been revealed in His Word.
 - ii. We discover His specific direction by: Knowing Scripture. Praying consistently. Listening to the Holy Spirit. Seeking godly counsel. Examining our motives. Obeying what God has already revealed.
 - iii. Often, we want additional direction while resisting our present instruction.
 - iv. God usually gives more light to those who faithfully walk in the light they already have.
- f. Live Under the Spirit's Influence – (v. 18)
 - i. This is the climactic command of the passage.
 - ii. Drunkenness represents surrender to the controlling influence of a substance. Paul contrasts that with surrender to the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit.
 - iii. Wine affects how a person walks, talks, thinks, and acts. When we are filled with the Spirit, His presence should affect how we walk, talk, think, and act.
 - iv. "Be filled" indicates an ongoing experience. Paul is not saying, "Be filled once and live on the memory." He is saying, Keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - v. Yesterday's filling was real, but today's assignment requires present dependence.
 - vi. We do not need a memory of the Spirit's presence. We need a present filling of the Spirit's power!
- g. Let the Filling Overflow – (v. 19–21)
 - i. Spirit-filled people speak life - (v. 19). The Spirit changes how believers speak to one another. Spirit-filled speech encourages, strengthens, comforts, and points people toward Jesus.
 - ii. Spirit-filled people worship - (v. 19). Spirit-filled worship is both congregational and personal. It comes from the heart and is directed to the Lord.
 - iii. Spirit-filled people give thanks - (v. 20). Thanksgiving is not pretending that everything is pleasant. It is trusting that God remains faithful in every circumstance.
 - iv. Spirit-filled people practice submission – (v. 21). Being Spirit-filled does not make us arrogant, uncontrollable, or self-important. The fullness of the Spirit produces humility.
- h. The truly Spirit-filled person does not always demand to be noticed, heard, obeyed, or placed first.
- i. If our spirituality makes us too important to serve, it is not the spirituality of Jesus!
- j. Application: Examine where your current habits are leading you. Ask the Holy Spirit to renew your joy, gratitude, and awareness of His presence. Identify one opportunity you have been postponing and act on it this week. Do not settle for yesterday's encounter. Ask God for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit today.

- **Because we belong to Jesus, we must walk in love, walk in light, and walk in wisdom through the power of the Holy Spirit.**
- **Paul has shown us three dimensions of a transformed life:**
 - **Walk in love—let the cross shape your relationships.**
 - **Walk in light—let Christ transform your character.**
 - **Walk in wisdom—let the Holy Spirit direct your decisions.**