

Exegetical Notes – Ephesians 5:1-17

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Ephesians 5:1-17

Verses 1-2

¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

- There is a “therefore” at the beginning of this passage, too. Correct behavior always comes from correct doctrine. Since our minds as Christians have been changed by the life and example of Christ, we no longer think as the world does. Our minds have been renewed by the truth which is found in Jesus Christ as we have been taught. We have put off our old natures which were corrupt and we are made new creatures in Jesus Christ. As a result of that change, we are different.
- Now, we follow the example of God set for us in the life of Jesus Christ. We are as Jesus was - God’s beloved children - and we walk in the way Jesus walked, “the way of love.”
- “The way of love” is most fully described in 1 Corinthians 13. It is most perfectly illustrated in the life of Jesus. Jesus laid down his life to save us and to restore us to God. Jesus became a lovely scent to God. His life was offered to God as a sacrifice to pay for our sins.

Verses 3-7

³ 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. ⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them.

- “But” is better translated, “therefore.” Because we have been renewed in our thinking through Christ and do not think as the world thinks any longer, there must be “no hint of sexual immorality” among us. The world is full of sexual immorality. People in our world totally disregard the rules laid down in God’s word regarding sex. But Christians do not think in the way the world does! They do not disregard the rules God has laid down in His word on this subject or any other subject. They do not become involved in sexual relations which defy the word of the Lord. (The writer of these notes finds it interesting that the commentary he is using to assist him in preparing these notes skips over verse 3 entirely. It makes no mention of sexual purity being essential for Christian behavior. And yet the word of God makes it clear that Christians think differently than does the world about sex and sexual relationships.)
- There should be NO kind of moral impurity among Christians. This includes
 1. Greed (the desire to attain wealth above all else).
 2. Obscenity (Christians do NOT use the “f” word under any circumstance. They do not use oaths to make their speech more empathetic. They follow the example of Jesus. Jesus said, “Let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no;’ anything beyond this comes from the evil one” Matthew 5:37).
 3. Foolish talk or coarse joking (Christians do not engage in telling dirty jokes or cruel speech. Christians find such things out of order because they should be constantly praising God).
- Christians avoid these behaviors because they do not bring them, or anyone, the blessing of God. Instead, these behaviors bring God’s wrath upon those who practice them. Paul warns his readers not to be confused by the people of the world who find no problem in these behaviors. Christians are called out of the world and do not live as the world does. We cannot be partners with the people of the world and live as they do.

Verses 8-11

⁸ *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light* ⁹ *(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)* ¹⁰ *and find out what pleases the Lord.* ¹¹ *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*

- Once, before we came to Christ, we “walked in darkness.” Once, we walked as does the world. But we have come out of that darkness. We now follow

the example of Christ. We walk in the light of Christ. We practice goodness, righteousness and truth. We seek to please God in all that we do!

- We do not live in darkness. We expose the lies that come from the minds of those who do not know Christ. We do not follow the dark practices of the world; we expose them for what they are.

Verses 12-17

¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. ¹⁴ This is why it is said:

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

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

- What non-Christians do in secret is shameful to mention. The light of God exposes it for what it is, shameful. It, therefore, becomes a “light” to those who follow Christ. We see it for what it is. We know that the world walks in darkness and that we should not follow the example of those who do not follow Christ.
- Paul then quotes an ancient hymn which quotes several, several themes from the Old Testament. The call of Christ is to “come out of the darkness and to walk in the light” (see Romans 12:1-2).
- Christians must be very careful not to live as the world lives. We must take every opportunity to live as God’s children because the times in which we live are evil. People do not love to glorify God in the way they live, but those who follow Christ must live to honor Christ. They must do life God’s way!

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