

WALK IN THE LIGHT

Ephesians 5:1-18

WALK IN LOVE (1)

- * Everything is embraced by the great command—‘Love one another as I have loved you’ (John 13:34)
- * Walk = continual action
- * Walk = progress
- * 1 Cor 12:31; 13:13; 14:1

A fragrant offering

- * In OT times, sacrifices had ‘a pleasing aroma to the Lord’
 - * Burnt offering (Lev 1:9, 13, 17; 6:15; 17:6; Num 15:3, 7, 10; 28:8, 13)
 - * Grain offering (Lev 2:2, 9, 12; 6:21; Num 15:13, 14; 28:2, 6)
 - * Peace offering (Lev 3:5, 16)
 - * Sin offering (Lev 4:31; Num 15:24)
 - * Ordination offering (Lev 8:21, 28)
 - * Firstfruits (Lev 23:13; Num 18:17)
 - * Passover (Num 28:24)
 - * Feast of Trumpets (Num 29:2, 6)
 - * Day of Atonement (Num 29:8)
 - * Pentecost (Lev 23:18; Num 28:27)
 - * Feast of Tabernacles (Num 29:13, 36)
- * These sacrifices pre-figured Christ’s sacrifice for us. This, too, was a fragrant offering to God
- * Love always requires sacrifice
- * So when we love each other, it is a fragrant offering to God. When we do not, it is a stench to him

WALK IN THE LIGHT (8)

Love is one thing; sexual immorality is another. Twice Paul warns against three major sins (3, 5)—

- * Sexual immorality (*porneia*)
- * Impurity (*akatharsia*)
- * Covetousness (greed)

Sexual sin

Porneia includes—

- * Pre-marital sex
- * Incest
- * Bestiality
- * Homosexuality
- * Adultery (also called *moicheia*)
- * Voyeurism
- * Lasciviousness

The ancient world

- ✦ Sexual sin was common in the ancient world
- ✦ Pompeii—12, 000 people; 34 brothels; explicit art etc
- ✦ Ephesus—Artemis ‘many-breasted’; brothels; statues
- ✦ Homosexual practice common
- ✦ The NT makes no attempt to accommodate these practices. Neither should we.

Greed is idolatry

- ✦ Greed is the desire to have more than we need eg in modern materialistic world
- ✦ Covetousness (greed) and sexual sin are linked together.
- ✦ The focus is on seeking pleasure rather than giving love
- ✦ Such sins must not even be named among us
- ✦ Covetousness is actually idolatry (5)
- ✦ These things are works of darkness (8-14)

Walk in the light

- ✦ A common argument is that we should be free to follow our desires
- ✦ Eg Elvis Presley song...
- ✦ ‘If it feels so right, it can’t be wrong’
Step in these arms, where you belong
It feels so right, so right How can it be wrong?
- ✦ Eg Or this one sung by Debby Boone...
- ✦ It can't be wrong
When it feels so right
'Cause You
You light up my life
- ✦ The truth is it can be very wrong no matter how much it may *feel* right
- ✦ We have made pleasure the standard by which we judge
- ✦ Holiness is God’s standard
- ✦ Holiness and sexual immorality do not co-exist
- ✦ Holiness produces happiness; happiness does produce holiness
- ✦ Whether married or single, true joy is found in doing the will of God (5:17)

Homosexual practice

People also justify actions on the basis that they are ‘born that way.’ Eg woman at conference: ‘Oh, well if God made them like that, and they don’t bother anyone else, we should accept them...’ This is an argument commonly used to justify homosexual practice—

- ✦ I am homosexual
- ✦ I was born this way
- ✦ I have a powerful natural drive
- ✦ Therefore it is natural to express it
- ✦ We are all one in Christ (Gal 3:26)
- ✦ Therefore I am to be accepted as I am

- ❖ What I do doesn't hurt anyone else
- ❖ Therefore I can practise it

What if...

- ❖ What if we apply this same line of reasoning to other practices?
- ❖ Substitute the words 'gambler' or 'pedophile' in the previous section for the word 'homosexual.' It is obvious that the reasoning is faulty.
- ❖ Even if homosexuality were innate this would not justify it
- ❖ We are all expected to exercise self-control outside of marriage

Why homosexual practice is wrong

1/Marriage is the only divinely endorsed sexual relationship between two people

- ❖ Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:1-12; Eph 5:21-33
- ❖ No matter how powerful our sex drive, biblically it should only be expressed through marriage

2/Homosexual practice is sinful

- ❖ Homosexual people need to be accepted and loved
- ❖ There is a great struggle against powerful temptation
- ❖ Nevertheless homosexual practice is sinful
- ❖ Romans 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:10

Thought and speech (4)

Three things to avoid—

- ❖ Filthiness = shameful, or obscene speech
- ❖ Foolish talk = stupidity; silly talk
- ❖ Crude joking = deceptive speech

Pornography

- ❖ A related area is that of pornography
- ❖ Pornography has always been a problem eg statues; temple rites in Paul's day
- ❖ But more readily available now than ever before—film, video, DVD, internet etc
- ❖ Need to set up clear boundaries eg 'I will never watch sexually explicit films...' cf Job 31:1
- ❖ It is too easy to imitate (compare violence)

What's wrong with pornography?

- ❖ Defective—relational and procreational elements are put aside
- ❖ Delusive—false expectations are built up
- ❖ Distorted—aberrations from normal married sexual practice are promoted
- ❖ Demeaning—people are seen as sexual objects
- ❖ Desensitising—the conscience becomes blunted
- ❖ Destructive—relationships are destroyed
- ❖ Degrading—it takes increasing extremes to give the same thrill

Consequences

- ❖ Such sinners will not inherit God's kingdom (5)

- * Disobedience invokes God's wrath (6)
- * Do not associate with them (7)
- * Discern what pleases the Lord (10)
- * Works of darkness are unfruitful (11)
- * Take no part in them (11)
- * Expose them (11)
- * It is shameful even to speak of them(12)

How to overcome

- * Wake up! (14)
- * Be careful (15)
- * Be wise (15)
- * Make the best use of your time (16) lit 'to buy up at the market-place' ie to get the best bargain in time usage or to buy back time already lost.
- * Understand the Lord's will (17)
- * Be filled with the Spirit (18)

Challenge

Will you take a stand today against immorality and impurity?

- * Singles—stay virgin until married
- * Married—be faithful
- * All—avoid immorality in any form
- * All—set boundaries to viewing, reading etc
- * All—walk in love and walk in the light
- * Struggling?—let Christ change you by the cleansing of his blood and the power of his Spirit!
- * Take a stand: celibate in singleness; faithful in marriage.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Read Ephesians 5:1-18

1. What do you think it means to be an 'imitator of God'? (1)
2. Old Testament sacrifices were often described as sending a fragrance to God. Why else do you think the sacrifice of Jesus would be like a sweet fragrance?
3. 'Saints' means holy people (3). Why does Paul particularly use this word here?
4. What is the best cure for swearing? (4)
5. 'Addiction is simply a form of greed.' Do you agree? Why or why not? When you have considered this, refer to 1 Cor 6:9-11; Eph 5:5; Col 3:5.
6. Paul draws at least five contrasts between immorality and godliness (4-15). How many can you find? (eg an obvious one is the contrast between light and darkness). What can we learn from these?
7. Imagine you have a guest seated in the corner of your lounge or family room who frequently swears, uses crude language, and urges you to be violent and sensuous in your behaviour. How would you feel about inviting that person back again? Maybe this is what your TV set did last week? If so, what can you do about it?

8. If we want to see what is hidden in darkness we turn on the light. What is the light that exposes sins? How do we turn it on? (8-14).
9. Look at the advice given by Paul (15-18). In what practical ways can we apply it? (eg *How* do we make the best use of time? *How* do we discern the Lord's will?)

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