

Session 5

August 23, 2020

WE STRENGTHEN ONE ANOTHER

Ephesians 5:8-21

In the previous chapter, Paul talked about maintaining “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3). As I mentioned before, while *uniformity* means everybody looks alike, *unity* means everybody is pulling in the same direction. Moving in God’s direction is what Paul refers to as “the walk;” a term he uses seven times in this epistle. In the focal verses this week, the apostle emphasizes that pulling in the same direction means just that. He uses three **contrasts** to make his case.

Light rather than darkness (vv. 8-14). Paul uses the word *light* six times in Ephesians, and *dark* or *darkness* five times. The contrast is obvious. The previous verses (5:3-7) point out the coarse talk, immoral nature, and general foolishness that spill from those who walk in darkness. The exhortation here is for believers to walk in the light rather than muddle in the darkness from which they had been delivered (see also Col. 1:13). But beyond the obvious admonition, there are some noticeable nuances to these instructions. First, walking in the light produces positive fruit (v. 9) while walking in darkness produces no fruit (v. 11). Second, walking in the light is directly connected to pleasing the Lord. The word *discerning* in verse 10 could apply to the believer who knows what the Lord wants and does it, or to the works themselves which *prove* (as translated in the KJV) that walking in the light pleases Him. Third, as light exposes darkness, so those who walk in the light are to expose the futility of staying in the darkness (v. 11). Fourth, shining the light on something does more than *expose it*; it *makes it clear*; or *explains* what it really is (v. 14). The source of the saying that closes verse 14 is not known, but the essence is certainly Scriptural: those who are dead in their trespasses and sins (see Eph. 2:1) arise out of their sinful stupor only when awakened by Christ and illuminated by His truth.

Wisdom rather than foolishness (vv. 15-17). In these verses, Paul moves from *how we act* to *how we think*. Three lessons are offered. First, the wise person pays careful attention not only to *where* he walks, but *how* he walks. The old English uses *circumspectly*, which reinforces the idea of the great care and intense concentration needed to walk honorably with the Lord (see 4:1). Those who stumble along carelessly (like those who walk in the dark) are foolish, risking grave injury and loss. Second, the wise redeem the time (v. 16); that is, they take advantage of every opportunity they have for godly service. The reason? The days in which we live are dark and evil...and fleeting. The wise know this and respond with a renewed fervor. Third, unlike the foolish, the wise *understand what the Lord’s will is* (v. 17). The word is stronger than simply “knowing.” It implies both comprehension and application. To not know His will would be foolish. To know it, and not embrace it would be even more so.

Spirit-control rather than self-control (vv. 18-21). Those who value walking in the light and embracing God’s will know the key to doing so is being filled with God’s Spirit (v. 18). At first glance, the metaphor—comparing the Spirit to drunkenness—might seem inappropriate. But the verse has nothing to do with wine; it has everything to do with *control*. Those who are drunk lose total self-control; those filled with the Spirit do the same! But while being filled with wine leads only to carnal debauchery, being filled with God’s Spirit leads to heavenly delight. In the church

setting, Spirit-filling encourages us in our *communication* with one another (v. 19); in our *communion* with God the Father (v. 20); and in our *submission* to both one another and our Lord (v. 21).