

Session 4

June 26, 2022

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 5:8-21

A few weeks ago, we saw how John used contrasts like darkness versus light and death versus life to describe life in the Spirit. Last week, we saw from Romans how Paul used contrasts as well: life versus death, Spirit versus flesh, slave versus adopted son etc., to describe how a believer has been freed from the oppression of sin and brought into God's family. Here, in Paul's epistle to the church at Ephesus, the apostle dedicated chapters 1, 2, and 3 to *ecclesiology* (the doctrines of the church) and chapters 4, 5 and 6 to *application* of those theological truths. In this case he does not contrast *motifs*, but rather *instructions*. Hence, these verses are filled with commands about what to do...and what *not* to do. All emphasize the Christian "walk."

Likening the Christian life to a "walk" is rich in meaning. The Christian life is indeed a journey. There is *progression* (from the start to the finish); there is *maturation* (from newborn babes in Christ, to mature believers); there is *saturation* (the active, daily living out of biblical principles); there is *intention* (the willful decision to keep moving), and there is *destination* (from corrupt earth to glorious heaven).

Walk in the light (vv. 8-14). The movement from darkness to light is a powerful picture. The singular principle that light pierces darkness and ultimately drives it out is a God-phenomenon that I believe He built into creation itself. We have all been rightly taught that darkness never drives out light; rather, light always drives out darkness. Throughout Scripture, the natural and supernatural forces of this world are depicted as darkness, while the things of God are depicted as light (for example, see Is. 9:2; Eph. 6:12 et al). First John 1:5 states that "God is light," and Jesus said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world." In light of all of this (no pun intended!), it makes perfect sense that those who have come to Christ, the Light of the World, should emulate Him (v. 8). The fruit produced by the light (v. 9) are all exemplified by the Lord Jesus. Verse 10 is a bit awkward because of its placement. But if you see verse 9 as a parenthetical statement (as some translations actually present it), verse 10 completes verse 8. Hence, walking in the light enables the believer to discern (by the same light) what is pleasing to the Lord. For reflection: *Notice the not-so-subtle shift in how light is used in verses 11-14. Whereas the former verses depict light as producing fruit, the latter verses apply to exposing sin. How do you see these two principles working together?*

Walk in wisdom (vv. 15-18). The next principle involves how believers are to *think* when they walk. I recall when we served as missionaries in Brazil. Our son was about 10 years old when he got frustrated and stomped off down the sidewalk. We couldn't help but chuckle, however, when in his childish rage he failed to watch where he was going and walked straight into a fixed metal trash can. In this section, believers are not simply told to watch *where* they walk (in the light), but *how* to walk. Paul's first guideline is to walk *carefully* (v. 15). I like the KJV word: *circumspectly*, which implies *watching from all sides*. His second guideline (in wisdom) is more elaborate. First, walking in wisdom means *making the most of what opportunities we have* (v. 16). Why? Because the days we live in are filled with all types of pitfalls and hazards. Second, walking in wisdom means *moving with a deliberate intention to follow God's will* (v. 17). Third,

walking in wisdom means *being continually filled with—and controlled by—the Holy Spirit*. For reflection: *Why do you think Paul used the metaphor of drunkenness in conjunction with the filling of the Spirit? What nuances in thought and behavior might he have had in mind?*

Walk in submission (vv. 19-21). This final section addresses the believer's walk within the body of Christ. Since all believers are supposed to be walking in the light and walking in wisdom, it makes sense that we be comfortable walking that way together. Twice Paul mentions our activities toward "one another" (vv. 19, 21); but three times he mentions our activities in relation to the godhead: there is praise to the *Lord* (v. 19), thanksgiving to *God the Father* (v. 20), and submission to one another *in the fear of Christ* (v. 21). In every way, there is to be unity among the body. That is achieved by submission to God and to one another. For reflection: *While God the Father and God the Son are both mentioned specifically in this section, what do you believe is the Holy Spirit's role in all this? Can you support your view from the Scriptures?*