

Newness (pt.2)

New Family, New Walk

Study 8d: CONTRAST TWO FAMILIES (5:1-14)

5:1,2 How can we really know who love God and are therefore His children? (1 John 3:1,10-18, esp. 16)

So I come to the blessed truth that Christian morality does not say to us, "Now begin, and work, and tinker away at yourselves, and try to get up some kind of excellence of character, and then come to God, and pray Him to accept you." That is putting the cart before the horse. The order is reversed. We are to begin with taking our personal salvation and God's love to us for granted, and to work from that. Realise that you are beloved children, and then set to work to live accordingly. If we are ever to do what is our bounden duty to do, in all the various relations of life, we must begin with recognising, with faithful and grateful hearts, the love wherewith God has loved us. We are to think much and confidently of ourselves as beloved of God, and that, and only that, will make us loving to men. [Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions: Ephesians*, p. 275]

5:3-6 Is it really tough to recognize who ARE NOT God's children?

In the preceding section the apostle had spoken of sins against our neighbour; here ... he dwells principally on sins against ourselves. Not only fornication, but every thing of the same nature, or that leads to it, is to be avoided -- and not only avoided, but not even named among believers. The inconsistency of all such sins with the character of Christians, as *saints*, men selected from the world and consecrated to god, is such as should forbid the very mention of them in a Christian society. [Hodge 283]

Now from the heart within, now from outward influences, as conversation, literature, or what not, comes the suggestion that things are not so bad as the prophets of judgment paint them. Sin is not all that they would have it, is it not after all an incident of our finite nature? Is it not perhaps even a step upwards ... in the development of that nature into a larger experience ... [Moule 253]

The gravest disservice any man can do to a fellow man is to make him think lightly of sin. [Barclay 163]

Alexander Maclaren
Expositions of Holy Scripture



5:7-10 How do the "children of light" GET their light? (2 Tim. 2:15,16; 3:13-17; 4:1,2,13)

Union with Him makes light, just as the bit of carbon will glow as long as it is in contact with the electric force, and subsides again into darkness when that is switched off. To be in Christ is to be a child of light ... [Maclaren 277]

Truth (*aletheia*) is not in New Testament thought simply an intellectual thing to be grasped with the mind; it is moral truth, not only something to be *known* but something to be *done*. The light which Christ brings makes us useful citizens of this world; it makes us men and women who never fail in duty, human or divine ... [Barclay 164]

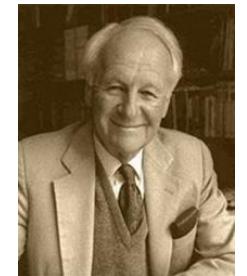
The ethics as well as the theology of the Bible are founded on the principle, that knowledge and holiness, ignorance and sin, are inseparable. If you impart knowledge you secure holiness; and if you render ignorant you deprave. [Hodge 293]

5:11-14 How may we "expose" the "unfruitful deeds of darkness"? (Matt. 5:14-16)

And, brethren, remember, a part of the separation is that your light shall be a constant condemnation of the darkness. "But rather reprove them," says my text; that is a work that devolves upon all Christians. It is to be done, no doubt, by the silent condemnation of evil which ever comes from the quiet doing of good. As an old preacher has it, "The presence of a saint hinders the devil of elbow-room for doing his tricks." [Maclaren 285]

Time lost can never be found:
How are we doing in discipline?

Somebody once advertised as follows: "LOST, yesterday, somewhere between sunrise and sunset, two golden hours, each set with 60 diamond minutes. No reward offered, for they are gone for ever". By contrast, Jonathan Edwards, the philosopher-theologian who became God's instrument in the "Great Awakening" in America in 1734-5, wrote in the 70th of his famous *Resolutions* just before his 20th birthday: "Resolved: Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can." He was a wise man, for the first sign of wisdom which Paul gives here is a disciplined use of time ... Nothing is more important in life than to discover and do the will of God. Moreover, in seeking to discover it, it is essential to distinguish between his "general" and his "particular" will. The former is so called because it relates to the generality of his people and is the same for all of us, e.g. to make us like Christ. His particular will, however, extending to the particularities of our life, is different for each of us ... Only after this distinction has been made can we consider how we may find out *what the will of the Lord is*. His "general" will is found in Scripture; the will of God for the people of god has been revealed in the Word of God. But we shall not find his "particular" will in Scripture. To be sure, we shall find general principles in Scripture to guide us, but detailed decisions have to be made after careful thought and **prayer** and the **seeking of advice** from mature and experienced believers. [Stott 202-3, bold emph. added]



Study 8e: CONTRAST TWO WALKS (5:15-21)

5:15-17 How do the wise redeem the time? Contrast fools! (Prov. 2:1-5; 11:14; 16:20; 17:24; 24:5; 28:19,26; 29:18)

The same exhortation and in the same connection is found in Col. 4,5 ... "Walk in wisdom, redeeming the time." So that this right use of time, or this seizing on every opportunity for doing good, is in both places represented as the evidence and effect of wisdom, i.e. of divine truth ... [Hodge 301]

The Apostle calls again, for the seventh and last time in this Epistle, for a holy walk which is circumspect or punctually accurate in doing in every particular only that which is pleasing to God ... The antinomian deception is that exactness of conduct is an indifferent thing so long as there is soundness of doctrine; but such error is most serious. True piety is not a thoughtless security, but rather a watchful sobriety which is a daily habit of mind ... doctrine shall be adorned (Tit. 2:10). [Chafer 148-149]

Paul's next little paragraph is based upon two assumptions, first that Christians are *sophoi*, -- wise people, not fools -- and secondly that Christian wisdom is practical wisdom, for it teaches us how to behave. His word for to "behave" throughout the letter has been a Hebrew concept, to "walk". Our Christian walk or behaviour, he has written, must no longer be according to the world, the flesh and the devil (2:1-3), or like the pagans (4:17). Instead, it must be "worthy" of God's call, "in love", and "as children of light" (4:1; 5:1; 5:8). Now he adds a more general exhortation to us to behave like the wise people he credits us with being: *look carefully how you walk*, he writes. Everything worth doing requires care. We all take trouble over the things which seem to us to matter -- our job, our education, our home and family, our hobbies, our dress and appearance. So as Christians we must take trouble over our Christian life. We must treat it as the serious thing it is. "Be most careful then how you conduct yourselves: like sensible men, not like simpletons" (NEB). What, therefore, are the marks of wise people who take trouble over their Christian discipleship? [Stott 201-2]

"See that you walk circumspectly," rigidly, accurately, punctiliously. Live by law -- that is to say, live by principles which imply duties; for to live by inclination is ruin. The only safety is, look to your feet and look to your road, and restrain yourselves, "and so redeem the time." There is something else to look to. Feet? Yes! Road? Yes! But also look to your guide. Tread in Christ's footsteps, "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Make Him the pattern and example, and then you shall walk safely; and the path will carry you right into "His presence where there is fullness of joy." No great, noble, right, blessed life is lived without rigid self-control, self-denial, and self-crucifixion. Do not fancy that that means the absence of joy and spontaneity. "I will walk at liberty for I keep Thy precepts." Hedges are blessings when, on the other side, there are bottomless swamps of poisonous miasma, into which if a man ventures he will either drown or be plague-stricken. The narrow way that leads to life is the way of peace, just because it is a way of restrictions. [MacLaren 334]

5:18-21 In view of the context, how are we "filled with the Spirit"?

Men are said to be filled with wine when completely under its influence; so they are said to be filled with the Spirit, when he controls all their thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. [Hodge 302]

Of course in the heathen cult of Dionysus intoxication was regarded as a means to inspiration. But it is a serious mistake to suppose that to be filled with the Spirit of Jesus Christ is a kind of spiritual inebriation in which we lose control of ourselves. On the contrary, "self-control" (*enkratēia*) is the final quality named as "the fruit of

the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22-23. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit we do not lose control; we gain it. It is true that on the day of Pentecost some said the Spirit-filled disciples were drunk ... These were a minority, however, described by Luke as "others"; the majority had no such thought in their minds, but were amazed to hear God's mighty works being announced in their own languages. [Stott 204]

The festivals of the church with their worship and sacred song are to give a noble satisfaction to that craving for a common life which men endeavour to satisfy in a base and ignoble form by drunkenness and riot. [Dale 339]

The Spirit's filling is more, then, that His abiding Presence; it is His activities realized. To be filled with the Spirit is to have the Spirit fulfilling in us all that He came into our hearts to do. Again, to be getting filled with the Spirit is not to receive more of the Spirit; it is rather that more *conformity* to His mind and will is accorded to Him by the one in whom He already abides. The Spirit is *received* at the moment one believes on Christ for salvation (John 7:37-39), but the believer is *filled* with the Spirit only at such a time in which he does not grieve the Spirit by unwillingness to do His will (1 Thess. 5:19), and when the heart of such an one exercises that **constant dependence** upon the Spirit which is elsewhere termed, *walking by means of the Spirit* (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 8:4). [Chafer 151, bold emphasis added]

The call to thanksgiving is not uncommon in Paul's letters. The grumbling spirit is not compatible with the Holy Spirit. Grumbling was one of the besetting sins of the people of Israel; they were always "murmuring" against the Lord and against Moses. But the Spirit-filled believer is full not of complaining, but of thanksgiving. [Stott 206-207]

"Under the influence of the Holy Spirit we do not lose control, we gain it."

Building a house from the chimney down

God's way is -- first, new life, then better conduct. Men's way is, "cultivate morality, seek after purity, try to be good." And surely conscience and experience alike tell us that that is a hopeless effort. ... He is not a wise man that tries to build a house from the chimneys downwards. And to talk about making a man's doings good before you have secured a radical change in the doer, by the infusion into him of the very life of Jesus Christ Himself, is to begin at the top story, instead of at the foundation ... Many of us have made attempt over and over again, and the attempt always has failed and always will fail. You may do much for the mending of your characters and for the incorporation in your lives of virtues and graces which do not grow there naturally and without effort. I do not want to cut the nerves of any man's strugglings, I do not want to darken the brightness of any man's aspirations, but I do say that the people who, apart from Jesus Christ, and the entrance into their souls by faith of His quickening power, are seeking, some of them nobly, some of them sadly, and all of them vainly, to cure their faults of character, will never attain anything but a superficial and fragmentary goodness, because they have begun at the wrong end. [MacLaren 289-290]

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