

A Worthy Walk in Personal Life

Lesson Scope: Ephesians 4: 17 to 5 :21

References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus:

The first part of chapter 4 discusses the Christian's separation unto God in the church. The verses in this lesson scope discuss our separation from the world. These two aspects of separation are inseparable. This lesson continues the theme of the Christian's worthy walk but moves the focus from the church as a body to each member individually. Christ calls men and women from living "as other Gentiles" (4:17) to a higher and more noble plane of morality. The church consists of born-again believers, who have "put off. . . the old man" and "put on the new man." As children of light, they reprove the darkness of society and display the light of truth. At times Isaiah 64:6 is cited as Scriptural proof that holy living is not important to God. It is pointed out that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast." This lesson is a good opportunity to compare Scripture with Scripture and examine this line of thought. Salvation involves both provisional works and conditional works. Provisional works are the provisions God has made for the salvation of all mankind. These works are supernatural, are performed by God alone, and are a free gift to mankind. However, the Scriptures are clear that not all men will be saved. This is because there are also conditional works of salvation. These works need to be performed by men in order to take their part in God's gift. What was it that made Jesus say to the thief on the cross, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise"? Was it not his work of confessing his guilt and calling out to Jesus for mercy? Peter after his meeting with Cornelius said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Do not in any way diminish God's provisional works or imply that hypocritical compliance with church standards will get us to heaven; but do strongly teach that we have a personal responsibility to live in the fear of God and make it our task in life to "[work]

righteousness.” God’s provisional works and man’s conditional works are equally essential in an individual’s salvation.

Lesson Aim:

To identify principles related to holy living.

Theme Verse:

[Hebrews 12:14](#). Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Lesson Text:

Old Versus New

[Ephesians 4:17-32](#) ^(KJV) This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸ Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: ¹⁹ Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. ²⁰ But ye have not so learned Christ; ²¹ If so, be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²² That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; ²³ And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; ²⁴ And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. ²⁵ Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷ Neither give place to the devil. ²⁸ Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. ²⁹ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. ³⁰ And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³² And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Darkness Versus Light

Ephesians 5:1-11 ^(KJV) Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; ² And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. ³ But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; ⁴ Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. ⁷ Be not ye therefore partakers with them. ⁸ For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰ Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.

Fools Versus Wise

Ephesians 5:15-21 ^(KJV) See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, ¹⁶ Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*. ¹⁸ And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; ¹⁹ Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Questions for Study

Old Versus New

1. How is a holy life possible in light of man's corrupted nature?
2. What is involved in an honest walk?
3. When our emotions are stirred, how should we respond in order to avoid sin?
4. How are kindness and goodwill shown in the brotherhood?

Darkness Versus Light

5. What is the relationship between covetousness and immorality?
6. How do we reprove works of darkness?

Fools Versus Wise

7. What does it mean to redeem the time in daily life?
8. How can we maintain our heritage of edifying and worshipful singing?

Analysing the Passage:

The word therefore (4:17) ties the thought of unity in the church with the teaching on separation in the remainder of the chapter. The unity in the church described in the previous verse is possible only because believers are all separated unto the God of light. The word conversation (4:22) means “behaviour or manner of life.” Being a Christian involves so much more than simply saying the right things; it involves a person’s behaviour being elevated to a higher moral plane. Anger is an emotion that is native to all of us (4:26); however, it must be controlled, or it can do tremendous harm. If we think our anger is righteous indignation, we should read James 1:20.

The word clamour (4:31) carries the thought of controversy.

We are called to be followers (imitators) of God (5:1). We put off behaviour that is not convenient (not appropriate) (5:4) and walk circumspectly (accurately, carefully) (5:15). Filthiness means “obscene speech.” The word jesting is referring to ribald humour.

Principles and Applications

Old Versus New

1. Holiness is contrary to man’s sinful nature (4:17-18, 22).

Men in their unrenewed state walk after the vanity of their minds. They are in bondage to the base impulses of the carnal nature and are unable to see themselves for who they really are. Sinners waste their lives seeking satisfaction from an unholy and corrupt walk of life.

2. A holy life is possible only through God’s regenerative work (4:22-24).

Putting on the new man is our choice; however, the power and operation of renewal is of God. This wonderful work of grace can take place when we renounce and crucify the old life and accept God’s work of transformation in our hearts. Opening our hearts to the light of truth and the Holy Spirit allows God’s power to find expression in our daily walk.

3. A renewed mind produces an honest walk (4:25).

Jesus said, “I am . . . the truth” (John 14:6). Our old master, Satan, is the father of lies (John 8:44). Putting away lying is part of putting off the old man. Honesty reaches to the very core of our lives and involves our speech and thinking.

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We must be honest with God, others, and ourselves. Solid relationships are possible when individuals are committed to truth and anchored in the God of truth.

4. The new man has controlled emotions (4:26,31). We will not get through life without having our emotions stirred. However, in our humanity, anger is a dangerous emotion. Before retiring for the night, it is good to consider whether we have our emotions under control, and if not, reflect on how to remedy the situation and come to a place where we can forgive those who may have wronged us. When our anger is stirred, we must endeavour by God’s grace to prevent bitterness from taking root.

5. The unfeigned love of God in the heart produces love and forgiveness for others (4:32).

When we consider God’s love and care for us, we are moved to be kind to God’s other children. “As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31).

Darkness Versus Light

6. Purity in speech and action are needful to enter the “kingdom of Christ and of God” (5:3-6).

Actions spring from thoughts and words. Filthy speech will erode our sense of the seriousness of moral integrity and the sanctity of human relationships. We are not amused by the world’s filthy comedians and jokesters. Instead, our thoughts and words reflect a spirit of thanksgiving to God “for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men” (Psalm 107:8).

7. Children of light carefully guard their associations (5:7-8, 11).

Although we live in the world and relate to society, we do not participate in or condone the worldly lifestyle of those around us. Mixing Christian and worldly values distorts and dilutes the truth. As recipients of God’s light of truth, why would we live a shadowy life? When we are living as children of light, we welcome accountability for the safety it provides.

8. Children of light reprove evil with their words and a holy life (5:8, 11).

The light of Christ radiates from every aspect of the believer's life. God intends for us to let His light shine through us and be seen by the world (Matthew 5:14-16). Our understanding of the truth obligates us to apply it to our daily lives. These applications often cause a certain amount of tension between the Christian and unbelievers, but let us never be afraid to stand with truth. Pride and inconsistency in one's life makes a mockery of his profession and obscures the light.

Fools Versus Wise

9. Maintaining a holy walk requires vigilance (5:15-17).

Any road is acceptable to the aimless traveller; however, the wise traveller pays attention to his route in order to reach his desired destination. The fool not only misses opportunities to serve God but also has a more fundamental problem of failing to understand God's purposes for mankind, and as a result, fails to use time to prepare for eternity.

10. The Holy Spirit—filled individual radiates praise for all that God has done (5:18-20).

Wholesome music is a gift to us from God. Let us never forsake our heritage of Christian song in favour of corrupted music from the world's cistern.

Important Teachings

1. Holiness is contrary to man's sinful nature (4:17-18, 22).

2. A holy life is possible only through God's regenerative work (4:22-24).

3. A renewed mind produces an honest walk (4:25).

4. The new man has controlled emotions (4:26, 31).

5. The unfeigned love of God in the heart produces love and forgiveness for others (4:32).

6. Purity in speech and action are needful to enter the "kingdom of Christ and of God" (5:3-6).

7. Children of light carefully guard their associations (5:7-8, 11).

8. Children of light reprove evil with their words and a holy life (5:8, 11)

9. Maintaining a holy walk requires vigilance (5:15-17).

10. The Holy Spirit filled individual radiates praise for all that God has done (5:18-20).

11. Holiness produces pure and wholesome speech (4:25, 29).

Answers to Questions

1. How is a holy life possible in light of man's corrupted nature?

Man's nature is corrupted but not totally depraved. All men have a craving for God. God in mercy calls men to Himself. As we choose to respond to God's call, our spiritual sensibilities are awakened and the power of God becomes active in our lives.

2. What is involved in an honest walk?

All aspects of life are involved, including speech, motives, work ethic, occupations, and openness before God.

3. When our emotions are stirred, how should we respond in order avoid sin?

Do not be hasty to speak or act. Remember, two wrongs do not make a right. Come to a place of forgiveness, and let the situation rest in God's hands before retiring for the night.

4. How are kindness and goodwill shown in the brotherhood?

As we help each other in spiritual and physical ways without a haughty attitude. As we believe the best about others' motives. By having no respect of persons.

5. What is the relationship between covetousness and immorality?

The same spirit of unrestrained desire drives both. They often overlap.

6. How do we reprove works of darkness?

We reprove works of darkness by walking as children of light. At times it is appropriate to remind people of their accountability to God in heaven.

7. What does it mean to redeem the time in daily life?

We use the time we are given to prepare for eternity. We lay up treasure in heaven.

8. How can we maintain our heritage of edifying and worshipful singing?

We appreciate it. We teach our children to sing. When we worship, we must keep the focus on God.

Summarizing the Lesson:

Putting on the new man is a choice that we make to surrender to the lordship of Christ. However, it is not a choice that happens just once and is done, but rather is a lifetime calling and will finally be perfected in glory.

Research Guide:

1. Use Vines Complete Expository Dictionary to research the meanings of the following words: clamour (4:31), followers (5:1) (see imitator), jesting (5:4).
2. Use Strong's Exhaustive Concordance to find verses that contain the word works in the New Testament.
3. Read Exploring the Epistle to the Ephesians, from Rod and Staff Publishers, Inc., pages 86-111.