

The Theme Throughout Ephesians – Part 2

In the first part of this series on the theme that flows through Ephesians, we saw that every Christian experience begins with sitting and listening to what the Word of God, the Christian Bible, is telling us.

Central to this is what God the Father has done through His Son Jesus Christ. Only when we accept this fact that God the Father has done for all humanity that no human being could accomplish under their own ability or strength, that we can begin to walk the Christian path in life.

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that all true Christian life begins with resting in faith of all that God has already done for each one of us through Jesus Christ.

Though the Christian life begins with sitting and listening to the words of Jesus Christ, it always is followed by walking in a new life of obedience to our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

What then has the epistle of Ephesians to say to us about this new walk we are to take in life?

We will see that the epistle urges upon us two things.

Ephesians 4:1-2, 17-21 [New King James] *“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,” ... “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:”*

Eight times in Ephesians the word “walk” is used. The **Greek word translated “walk” is “*pēripatōō*” referring to how we deport ourselves, how we conduct our day-to-day life.**

Ephesians 5:2, 8-10 [New King James] *“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” ... “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”*

The renewing of the whole field of our relationships, both domestic and public.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Such a dramatic change in the way we conduct ourselves in life as a true Christian demands the total sacrifice of our lives as an offering to God to use. For this to be productive our mind has to be re-educated by an active presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

Ephesians 4:21-24 [New King James] *“if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”*

This renewing of our mind and human spirit, by the work of the Holy Spirit in us, essential for us to walk in this new way of life.

Let us be clear that the body of Christ, the true Christian Church, is **not** something remote and unreal to be expressed only in spiritual terms. It is very present and practical, finding the real test of our conduct in our relationships with other human beings.

Unless we bring our Christian walk into our dwellings and workplace, and practice it there, it will be without meaning.

Ephesians 5:22-29 [New King James] *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.”*

These are the commanded words; how well are they being acted out in your family?

Another scriptural passage that refers to the same part of our Christian walk is 1 Corinthians 7:1-16. It would do every husband and wife good to read these scriptures carefully to discover what real married life, lived before our Creator God is and demands you dare not theorise about a thing that is so practical.

When we add Revelation 19:6-9 we can see that our physical marriage is an opportunity for us to prepare for the marriage relationship of the true Christian Church with Jesus Christ in the future.

Note the words “his wife has made herself ready.” In the physical relationship both wife and husband are to prepare to be the loving partner of Jesus Christ.

This is how important it is that we walk now according to the Word of God which we studied as we rested in what God has done for us through our future husband.

This shows just how important the marriage relationship is to our Saviour and Creator God.

Ephesians 4:25-32 [New King James] *“Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour,’ for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,** by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”*

This passage of scripture reflects the very words of Jesus Christ, [Matthew 5:38-48] that ends with the statement to become perfect even as God the Father is perfect. **For us this is an impossible task.**

This is why Paul introduces us to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, for it is His active presence in our lives that produces the very characteristics of the perfect God the Father in us.

Galatians 5:22-25 [New King James] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those*

who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Notice that these "fruits" of the spirit are a result of our "walk in the Spirit."

This is why Paul tells the Ephesians to "*put away from you*" all the results of malice, that is anything that would injure other people, physically, mentally or spiritually, for this will "*grieve*" the Holy Spirit.

Ever since the day that Eve took fruit from the tree of knowledge and shared it with Adam, [Genesis 3:1-6] humans have been engaged in deciding what is good and what is evil. The natural human being has worked out their own standards of right and wrong, justice and injustice, and striven to live by them.

As a true Christian we should be different, we have a different starting point, the "*tree of life*," [Genesis 2:8-9] which is Jesus Christ, [John 1:1-4, 14].

Nothing can do greater damage to our Christian testimony than trying to demand right of others, when we ask ourselves if we have been justly or unjustly treated seeking to vindicate our actions.

As a true Christian our standard of living is to reflect what God did on the cross.

Ephesians 4:32 [New King James] "*And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*"

Right or wrong is the principles of those who do not yet know the true Eternal God, "*who makes His sun to shine on the evil as well as the good*," [Matthew 5:45]. It is a question of grace and not right or wrong.

The desire to please God is generated by our thankfulness for what He has done for us through His Son Jesus Christ, the very perfect expression of God's grace.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] "*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.*"

This is how we show our gratitude to our Creator and open up our minds to be re-educated by the active work of the Holy Spirit.

We need to remind ourselves that we often do what is not right, according to God's standards, but it is good to learn from such failures, be ready to confess and seek forgiveness, that we may become human beings not only in the "image" of God but also in His "likeness."

Genesis 1:26-27 [New King James] "*Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*"

Notice that the original creation and every other human being is created in God's "*image*" **only**, not His "*likeness*."

To understand this profound truth we have to understand the meaning of the two key words involved.

"*Image*" is translated from the Hebrew word "*tselem*" that means resemblance of outward form, a shadow of the real, a material representation.

"*Likeness*" is translated from the Hebrew "*demûwth*" meaning manner, attributes, character.

As we know, character is **only** formed over a period of time in the presence of the one whose character we seek to reflect, hence our walk with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:5 [New King James] *“having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,”*

All true Christians in each generation have been chosen by God [**John 6:44**] to have their chance of salvation and to receive the gift of eternal life, [**Romans 6:23**] but the vast majority of people will receive their chance after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, [**Revelation 20:11-13**].

Ephesians 3:14-19 [New King James] *“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”*

The growth we need as true Christians is the result of the Holy Spirit working in us.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 [New King James] *“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’”*

We have nothing to boast about for all the changes in our life and character as a true Christian are the end product of the working of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ [Romans 8:9] in us, it is not a matter of “try” but that of “trust.”

Too many people are only acting as Christians, largely a pretence.

They live a “*spiritual*” life, talk a “*spiritual language*,” about “*spiritual*” attitudes, but are doing the whole thing themselves; it does **not** come spontaneously, they have to force themselves to live that way.

Once we realise that our new life is the very life that Jesus Christ is living again on earth in us, our struggling will end and our pretence will be cast away.

Our words, prayers, our actions will all come spontaneously, an unforced expression of the life that is active within us.

Ephesians 4:17-24 [New King James] *“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”*

Every good thing in our lives is the end product of Jesus Christ at work in our lives.

Too many Christians have all the doctrine but live lives that are a contradiction of it.

Ephesians 5:15-21 [New King James] *“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”*

We are to walk as those filled with Godly wisdom, not foolishly.

Matthew 25:1-13 [New King James] *“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”*

We can link this parable to its fulfilment as recorded in Revelation by Jesus Christ through the apostle John.

Revelation 14:1-5 [New King James] *“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”*

There are many passages of scripture that assure us that God will finish what He has begun, [Philippians 1:6; Jude 24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Ephesians 3:20].

Some are troubled by the Lord Jesus Christ’s words at the end of this parable of the virgins, “I do not know you.”

How could Jesus Christ say this if they are virgins representing His true children, [2 Corinthians 11:2]?

All ten virgins had oil in their lamps, what distinguished the foolish was that they had **no** reserve vessels.

As true Christians [virgins] they had the gift of the Holy Spirit, [Acts 5:32] but they were **not** “filled with the Spirit.” **All in the end had enough oil, after buying more, but they missed the purpose for which it was intended, to illuminate the path of the bridegroom.**

These foolish virgins expressed a fitful testimony for they lived a hand-to-mouth existence. When a crisis comes they had to go out to buy more oil [Holy Spirit] for they had quenched the work of the Holy Spirit in them, [1 Thessalonians 5:15-22; Ephesians 5:17-18].

Wisdom is connected with time; those who are wise virgins redeem, embrace and improve every opportunity of doing good.

Look at the example of Paul: he was consumed with a burning passion.

Paul had seen that God's purpose for him and all true Christians was bound up in the "*fullness of the times,*" [Ephesians 1:10].

Paul was one of those who have hope in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:12; Ephesians 2:7 [New King James] "*that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.*" ... "*that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*"

In view of this forward looking attitude in life, Paul not only walks but runs, [1 Corinthians 9:26] and presses on towards the goal offered to him by Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:12-16 [New King James] "*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.*"

Paul expands on this goal in:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 [New King James] "*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*"

When we clearly understand this goal that God desires we attain, [Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 5:17] it will embrace our whole life.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] "*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.*"

The Greek word translated "*bodies*" in **Romans 12:1** is "*soma*" meaning our whole life, our physical body, our mind and our human spirit, [**Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11**]. This is how we can worship and please our Creator God, and know His will for us in His future Kingdom, the created family of God with the same "*likeness*" [character] as He has, that of love, mercy, compassion and faithfulness, the result of walking with Him through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ in us, [**Galatians 5:22-25; Romans 8:9**].

This is how we can avoid being foolish virgins!