

Ephesians 5:1-21; Be Imitators of God

by Karl Kemp; August, 2014

All quotations were taken from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition, unless otherwise noted. Sometimes I make comments in the middle of quotations using brackets [] or [[]] to make them more obvious. I am using straight quotation marks ("), hyphens (-) instead of dashes, and a few other things like this because some of the internet sites where I post these articles require it. Cf., e.g., means compare, for example

I believe the book of Ephesians is one of the most important books in the New Testament. All of the papers, articles, and discussions I mention in this paragraph are available on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching): Ephesians chapters 1 and 4 are discussed verse-by-verse. "Ephesians 4:17-32 and Righteousness and Holiness." "Ephesians 1:3, 4, 7; Holy and Blameless; Redemption and 'Aphesis.'" Ephesians 2:1-10; 3:14-21; and 6:10-20 are discussed (on pages 77-80, 53-55, and 55-56) in my "A Paper on Faith." Ephesians 6:1-3 are discussed on page 21 of my paper "The Christian, the Law, and Legalism." Ephesians 1:7; 5:3-8; and 5:22-33 are discussed (on pages 151-153, 186, and 174-178) in my book "Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ" and in my recently published e-book, "Righteousness, Holiness, and Victory Over Sin." (Both books are available at amazon.com.)

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved [born-again] children [[To be imitators of God as beloved children is quite a high calling, isn't it? It certainly includes being dead to sin and walking in the truth, righteousness, holiness, and love of God by the enabling grace of God in Christ (cf., e.g., Eph. 2:1-10), through the atoning death of Christ (cf., e.g., Eph. 1:7; 2:5, 6, 15; 5:2, 25-27), and by the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf., e.g., Eph. 1:13; 2:18; 3:16; 4:3, 4, 23 [I would translate, "be renewed by the Spirit in your mind/way of thinking"; see my article "Ephesians 4:17-32; Righteousness, Holiness, and Victory Over Sin" on my internet site; on thinking right, also see Rom. 8:5-8; 12:1-3], 30; 5:18; 6:17, 18). As we think in line with the word of God in our hearts and walk by the indwelling Spirit of God on a continuous basis, we will be imitating God, by His saving grace in Christ through faith.

There are many similar passages in the New Testament; passages like these certainly include the ideas of being dead to sin and walking in the truth, righteousness, holiness, and love of God by His grace. Since this is so important, I'll quote a few of them: "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, (15) but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; (15) because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY' " (1 PETER 1:14-16). "And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself just as He [the Lord Jesus; God the Son] is pure" (1 JOHN 3:3). "Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness [better, "the one who is doing

righteousness"] is righteous, just as He [the Lord Jesus] is righteous" (1 JOHN 3:7).
"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (MATTHEW 5:48).
"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ [the apostle Paul said]" (1
CORINTHIANS 11:1).

I'll quote several verses from 1 John that demonstrate that being born (born again) of God, who is totally righteous and holy and separate from sin, is designed to result in the righteousness, holiness, and victory over all sin for those born of Him: 1 JOHN 2:28, 29: "Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. (29) If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices [everyone who is doing] righteousness is born of Him." 1 JOHN 3:7 (quoted in the preceding paragraph). 1 JOHN 3:9 (NIV): "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed [the Holy Spirit] remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God." 1 JOHN 4:7: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." (These verses and many other verses from 1 John are discussed in some detail in my recently published e-book, "Righteousness, Holiness, and Victory Over Sin," that is available on amazon.com.) 1 JOHN 5:18: "We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He [he] who was born of God keeps him [[I would translate "himself" instead of "him," with the KJV; NKJV. The New Testament makes it very clear that we must cooperate with God's saving, sanctifying grace, which includes learning the basics of new-covenant salvation and resisting temptation. 1 John 3:3 (which is quoted in the preceding paragraph), for example, speaks of our purifying ourselves as the Lord Jesus is pure.]], and the evil one does not touch him."

The epistle to the Ephesians is packed with passages that speak of the call, enablement, and requirement for Christians to walk in the truth, righteousness, holiness, and love of God, with the victory over all sin ((cf., e.g., Eph. 1:3, 4 ["...He (God the Father) chose us in Him (in Christ Jesus) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love" (NKJV)], 7; 2:10; 4:1-3, 17-32 [These verses are extra important in that they come just before the verses we are studying in this paper (5:1-21). At the beginning of this paper I mentioned my article on Eph. 4:17-32 and my paper that includes all of Ephesians chapter 4. In Eph. 4:13-16 the apostle Paul dealt with the topic that "we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming" (Eph. 4:14), for example. I have a section there titled, "A Discussion on the Overall Teaching of the Book of Ephesians Regarding How Long It Should Take for Christians to Become Holy/Spiritual (by the Spirit)/(Relatively) Perfect.>"; 5:22-33 (These interesting and important verses that speak of our being "holy and blameless" in union with the Lord Jesus Christ [the apostle said we have become one with Him; the two have become one] are extra important in that they come just after the verses we are studying); and throughout most of Ephesians chapter 6 Paul exhorts us with the need to walk in the righteousness of God. For one thing, he exhorts us with the need to "be strong in the strength of His might" and "to put on the full armor of God, so that [we] will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (Eph. 6:10, 11).))

We always need to include the idea that as we are faithful to God we will be growing; we will be changed "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). In the ideal case we will be walking in the truth, righteousness, holiness, and love of God with the victory over all sin, but "we all...beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory..." (2 Cor. 3:18). Throughout this life we are being transformed (some of this will probably continue after we are glorified). In the ideal case we will be living in an abiding state of holiness and growing (being changed "from glory to glory").

When the apostle Paul speaks of imitating God here, as beloved children, there is some emphasis on "[being] kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven [us]" of Eph. 4:32 (which is the last verse in chapter 4) and on our "[walking] in love, just as Christ also loved [us] and gave Himself up for us," which are the words that follow in Eph. 5:2, but I believe the epistle to the Ephesians (very much including the verses that come before Eph. 5:1 and the verses that follow), and much of the rest of the New Testament, demonstrate that when Paul spoke of imitating God here he includes walking with the victory over all sin in God's truth, righteousness, holiness, and love. If we actually and fully walk in love toward God and people (through the grace of God in Christ, which includes all the work of the indwelling Righteous, Holy Spirit, in accordance with God's Word, by faith) there is no room for sin. Doesn't that sound good? For one thing, to walk in love is to keep all the commandments of God's moral law (cf., e.g., Matt. 22:36-40; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). God's moral law derives from His nature that cannot change.

In Eph. 4:22 the apostle exhorted us to once-for-all and completely lay aside the old man, which is corrupt in accordance with the lusts of deceit. In Eph. 4:24 he exhorted us to once-for-all and completely put on the new man, which in accordance with God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (These verses are discussed in some detail in my article on Eph. 4:17-32.)

I'll quote part of what D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said on Eph. 5:1, 2 ("Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17-5:17" [Baker Books, 1983], page 291). "Here in this new chapter we come to what is perhaps Paul's supreme argument, to the highest level of all in doctrine and in practice, to the ultimate ideal. There is nothing possible beyond this. This is the highest statement of Christian doctrine that one can conceive of or even imagine. It is really staggering, it is almost incredible; but here it is. 'Be ye followers [imitators; on the following page Lloyd-Jones says that "imitators" is a better translation] of God!'here Paul seems to me to be laying down what is after all a principle that governs everything; he is gathering up his message as it were; and then he will proceed to draw his practical deductions in verses 3 to 5. But the point is that the Apostle is here reminding us of something that we must never forget in the whole of our lives, all our thinking, all our conduct and practice and behavior. 'Be ye followers [imitators] of God, as dear children!'"]; **(2) and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us [referring to His atoning death], an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (3) But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be**

named [as existing] **among you, as is proper among saints** ["But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people" (NIV).] [{"Saints" (plural of the Greek adjective "hagios"; "saints" ("holy people") are SET APART by God for God. In the ideal case those who are set apart for God will live for Him from their hearts on a continuous basis in His righteousness, which includes not sinning against Him. God makes us holy by His saving/sanctifying grace in Christ, but the New Testament also makes it clear that we will not be holy (set apart for God) if we do not cooperate with His grace, and walk in line with His Word and by His Spirit, on a continuous basis, by faith (cf., e.g., Rom. 6:11 [with most of Romans chapter 6]; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:13-25; Col. 3:5-9; Heb. 12:14, 15; 1 Pet. 1:14-19; 1 John 3:3). I'll quote a sentence from what Lloyd-Jones (he was quoted under verse 1) says under verses 3-5, page 329: "We must never lose sight of the fact that the ultimate object of Christianity is that we should be holy, and that we should walk before God blameless, in love."]; **(4) and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting** ["obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking" (NIV)], **which are not fitting** [not fitting for God's born-again children, who are called to be saints], **but rather giving of thanks. (5) For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater** [[The "immoral [person]" here in verse 5 refers back to the word "immorality" of verse 3; the "impure person" to the word "impurity"; and the "covetous man, who is an idolater" to the word "greed." The covetous man bows down, so to speak, before the things he covets, which makes him an "idolater."]], **has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ** [God the Son] **and God** [God the Father]. [[The apostle Paul says that those who are practicing the sinful works of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God in GALATIANS 5:19-21: "Now the deeds [works] of the flesh [The works of the flesh (which is the equivalent of the works of the old man), which include all sins and not just sins especially associated with the physical body (consider idolatry and sorcery, for example, or pride and unbelief), are contrasted with the works of the Spirit (the works of righteousness and holiness that the indwelling Spirit of God enables us to do). Christians are to crucify the flesh (the old man [see Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24]) with its passions and desires; we are called to walk by the Spirit on a continuous basis and to not do the sinful works of the flesh (see Gal. 5:16), which equals walking with the victory over all sin.] are evident, which are immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, (21) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD [my capitalization for emphasis]." He says the same thing in 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9, 10: "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, (10) nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, WILL INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD [my emphasis]." All the verses I quoted or referred to in this paragraph are aimed at the apostle Paul's Christian readers. These passages contain powerful warnings to his Christian readers. So too for Eph. 5:3-7.

Although the apostle Paul spoke of sinners (sons of disobedience) not inheriting the kingdom of God at the end of this age in Gal. 5:21 and 1 Cor. 6:9, 10 (and clearly

affirmed that faithful Christians will inherit the kingdom of God at the end of this age), apparently what he said in Eph. 5:5-7 is a little different in that he apparently also mentioned their being denied a present (during this age) inheritance in the kingdom of God (cf. Rom. 14:17; Col. 1:13) and of a present participation in the wrath of God (cf., e.g., Rom. 1:18-32; John 3:36) along with wrath of God to be manifested at the end of this age. (This isn't a big difference, because it is obvious that those who are on the path that leads to the eternal wrath of God do not have a present inheritance in the kingdom of God and are subject to the wrath of God that is manifested during this present age.) To be denied having an inheritance in the kingdom of God goes with partaking of the wrath of God (cf. Eph. 5:6). Typically the apostle Paul speaks of the wrath of God being manifested at the end of this age (cf., e.g., Rom. 2:5, 8; 5:9; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10). In Eph. 1:11 Paul spoke of our having an inheritance now. In Eph. 1:14 he showed that what we have now is "a pledge [down payment] of our inheritance." A big part of our inheritance is reserved for the end of this age, when we will be glorified and begin to reign in a never-ending reign with the Lord Jesus and God the Father.

This is serious business! To not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God the Father is to miss heaven, and there is only one other alternative. In Eph. 5:6, 7 the apostle goes on to warn his Christian readers that if we are characterized by sin and are "sons of disobedience" (things which are incompatible with what Christianity is all about) we will inherit the wrath of God instead of having an inheritance in the kingdom of God. We must take warnings like this seriously! Many Christians don't take such warnings seriously. One primary reason for this is that they have been taught that they have been saved and there is no way they can lose their salvation. Many passages, including the one we are studying, show that they are making a big mistake. See my paper, "Once Saved, Always Saved?" God is not trying to get rid of us, quite the contrary, but, like I said, we must take such warnings seriously - they are part of God's word too!

When Christians sincerely repent if they sin, they are forgiven, but the heartbeat of Christianity is to live in the center of God's will in His truth, righteousness, holiness, and love. We must be aiming at that target! God hates sin, and He paid an infinite price to set us free from spiritual death and bondage to sin and spirits of darkness, and God knows our hearts.

I'll quote a paragraph from what Clinton E. Arnold says under Eph. 5:4c and 5:5 ("Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament" [Zondervan, 2010], page 325). I just purchased this commentary, and I haven't had the opportunity to spend much time reading it, but it was written by an evangelical scholar, and I believe it is a quality commentary, but Arnold believes that born-again Christians cannot lose their salvation but Arnold believes that born-again Christians cannot lose their salvation, and it effects his interpretation of this verse. The reason I want to quote this paragraph is because it illustrates a serious problem that has been concerning me for a long time: Many (but probably not the majority of) Christians who believe the doctrine of eternal security often teach the doctrine in a way that explains away the warnings in the New Testament, very much including the warnings that Christians must repent with a high priority where

repentance is required. The warnings, having been explained away, no longer function as the warnings that God intended, the warnings that must be taken seriously if we want to understand the balanced truth of what the New Testament teaches. This problem is all the more serious since the level of righteousness and holiness is at a dangerously low level in much of Christianity in our day, not to mention the absence of a healthy fear of God that is required under both the old and new covenants.

Right in the middle of one of the more powerful warnings (Eph. 5:1-7) of a large number of such warnings in the New Testament that Christians must make victory over sin a top priority, where the apostle Paul even warns Christians that they must not be deceived, because if they live as "sons of disobedience" they will inherit the wrath of God instead of the kingdom of Christ and God, Arnold tells us, for one thing, that "this clause (4:5b [5:5b, referring to the words at the end of Eph. 5:5 about not having an inheritance in the kingdom of God]) does not, then, function as a warning to believers that they should be aware of their actions lest they forfeit their inheritance. It has the exact opposite force. Paul wants them to be assured that they are heirs of the eternal kingdom." (I'll include Arnold's entire paragraph in the paragraph after the next one.)

The apostle Paul (along with the other writers of the New Testament) did not want his readers who were living in sin and/or believing things that do not line up with God's Word (especially the gospel) to feel secure or "to be assured that they are heirs of the eternal kingdom." He wanted them to repent with a top priority! The New Testament is packed with passages that prove my last sentence. For one thing, see my paper, "Once Saved, Always Saved?" that is on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching). I made it a priority to try to present the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on that topic in that paper. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches! Many Christians put all the emphasis on a set of verses that fit their viewpoint and then spend a lot of time and energy minimizing or trying to explain away all the verses that don't fit their viewpoint. This happens to one degree, or another, on essentially all of the topics where Christians disagree. Many of us Christian ministers need to humble ourselves before God and seek Him for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. We desperately need to hold, and teach, the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches!

"Paul claims that those whose lives are characterized by these vices will not have a share in the kingdom. [Arnold agrees with this statement, and he exhorts Christians to live right, but he doesn't believe Christians can lose their salvation.] Paul has already made it clear, however, that believers will have an inheritance with God because they have been sealed by the Spirit (1:13). He, in fact, prays that they will become increasingly aware of their identity as heirs (1:18). This clause (4:5:b [5:5b]) does not then function as a warning to believers that they should beware of their actions lest they forfeit their inheritance. It has the exact opposite force. Paul wants them to be assured that they are heirs of the eternal kingdom. Because of that they should now live like kingdom people and serve their loving and merciful God with a heart full of gratitude."

The apostle Paul wanted every Christian to make it top priority to believe and to live in agreement with the Word of God on a continuous basis (which includes repenting where

repenting is required), by grace through faith, and "to be assured that they are heirs of the eternal kingdom." He did not teach that there was no way that born-again Christians could lose their salvation. He (along with the other writers of the New Testament) warned his Christian readers that they could lose their salvation. See my paper, "Once Saved, Always Saved?" For one thing, believers can become unbelievers!

Six paragraphs later (still under Eph. 5:4c and 5:5) Arnold qualifies what I quoted above to some extent (for which I'm thankful), but not nearly enough: "...this passage is not a warning to believers [I totally disagree with this statement] but a reaffirmation of their new identity as a basis for the exhortation to godly living. [I agree that the apostle Paul often exhorted his readers to live righteous and holy lives in the truth of God, by grace through faith, on the basis of what God has done for them in Christ.]there is a secondary implication to the passage, as O'Brien ["Ephesians" (Eerdmans, 1999), page 363] rightly observes, 'Those who have given themselves over to immorality, impurity and greed, even if they call themselves Christian, show that they are excluded from eternal life.'

Most evangelical Christians who believe that it is impossible for born-again Christians to lose their salvation will acknowledge that if a person has "given themselves over to immorality, impurity and greed" and are characterized by sin will not inherit eternal life, because (they say) their being characterized by sin now demonstrates that they never became born-again Christians. Also, the words "being characterized by sin" is a very subjective measurement. By some Christians' definitions you would have to have a lot of sin for a long time to "be characterized by sin."

Charles Stanley goes further (even though he devotes a lot of his teaching to exhorting Christians to live as Christians are called to live); he teaches (in his book "Eternal Security" [Thomas Nelson, 1990]) that once a person has accepted Christ and forgiveness and salvation through Him by an act of faith, there is no way that person could lose their salvation. He says that even if that person has abandoned the faith and is characterized by sin they still are saved. (I have a lot of respect for Charles Stanley and his ministry, but I strongly disagree with him on this topic. I was shocked when I read this book. I am confident that he is trying to help people who have no assurance of salvation, but I believe this teaching substantially hurts the Body of Christ.)

I'll include a few brief excerpts from Stanley's book, which is still being sold at amazon.com, for one place: "If abandoning the faith or falling into sin [Stanley doesn't limit the type of sin or duration of the sin, including totally abandoning the faith without repentance] short-circuits salvation, I have the ability to demonstrate unconditional love to a greater extent than God. If there is a condition - even one - attached to God's willingness to maintain a relationship with His children, it is not unconditional. ..." (page 5). "... We are declared 'not guilty.' That's it! And yet *that* is what some argue we can lose. But how! How can I lose Christ's payment for my sin? Can God declare me 'guilty' after He has already declared me 'not guilty' " (page 28)? "The Bible clearly teaches that God's love for His people is of such magnitude that even those who walk away from the faith have not the slightest chance of slipping from His hand" (page 72). "Faith is simply

the way we say yes to God's free gift of eternal life. ... Consequently, God does not require a *constant attitude* of faith in order to be saved - only an *act of faith*" (page 77). "Forgiveness or salvation is applied at the moment of faith. It is not the same thing as faith. And its permanence is not contingent upon the permanence of one's faith" (page 78). "You and I are not saved because we have enduring faith. We are saved because at a moment in time we expressed faith in our enduring Lord. ..." (page 78). It is obvious if you don't have to continue in faith to be saved, there is no limit to how much you could be characterized by sin and still be saved. Do you think Christians who believe what Stanley says in the excerpts could possibly take the warnings in the New Testament seriously? (Now I'll start to quote Eph. 5:6.)] **(6) Let no one deceive you with empty words** [[That is, with empty words like the following: God doesn't care all that much what you believe, or how you are living, as long as you asked Christ into your heart and call yourself a Christian. He understands your sin and He certainly could not fail to take you into His heavenly kingdom. You don't have to be too concerned with finding out what the Bible says, or with repentance, or holiness. Many Christians are even telling us we don't even have to repent if we sin. However, the apostle Paul (in these verses and many other places, along with many other writers in the New Testament) says something quite different.], **for because of these things** [that is, because of living in sin/being "sons of disobedience"] **the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.** [[(See under verse 5.) There are many in our day who put all the emphasis on forgiveness and right standing with God, through believing in the sacrificial death of Christ Jesus and His resurrection, but who insist that repentance and obedience (a righteous lifestyle) are not required for salvation. However, the apostle Paul (and the other writers of the New Testament) consistently insisted that we are called, enabled, and required to live in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God as "sons of obedience" through the saving, sanctifying grace of God in Christ. And if we should sin, we must be quick to sincerely repent. We must make these things a top priority. Those who are "sons of disobedience" (which is comparable with being characterized by sin) will not inherit God's heavenly kingdom that is filled with His glory.

The "obedience" of the Lord Jesus Christ (with the emphasis on His all-important atoning death) was designed to result in the "obedience/righteousness" of Christians. See Rom. 5:19, for example. Romans chapter 5 is discussed in my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ" and in my recently published e-book, "Righteousness, Holiness, and Victory Over Sin." Both books are available at amazon.com.

Paul didn't teach here (or anywhere else) that if a sincere Christian slips into sin he immediately loses his salvation or has become a "son of disobedience" (as a person characterized by disobedience), but he certainly required genuine repentance and he required each Christian to make it top priority (by grace through faith) to walk in a state of righteousness and holiness with the victory over all sin. As far as God is concerned, any sin (if it really is sin) is too much sin. (Sin is rebellion against God and His will.) The gospel that the apostle revealed included the good news that God's saving, sanctifying grace is sufficient. God wants to sanctify/transform us, not to condemn us.]] **(7)**

Therefore do not be partakers [Greek "summetoxoi"] **with them** [[I prefer a translation

like "sharers," or "fellow sharers," or "partners" (NIV), instead of "partakers." The apostle warns His Christian readers that they must not be sharers with them (with the "sons of disobedience") by living as "sons of disobedience." And, significantly, it is to be understood that if you share with them in living as "sons of disobedience," you will also share/partake with them in the wrath of God. Although there is some preliminary wrath of God against those rebelling against Him during this age, the apostle is speaking, at least for the most part, of God's wrath that will come with His day of judgment.

The only other place the Greek noun "summetoxoi" is used in the New Testament is Eph. 3:6, where Paul spoke of the Gentiles being "fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers ["fellow partakers" was translated from "summetoxoi"; the NIV has "sharers together"] of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." The apostle Paul was speaking of a salvation that the Gentiles were participating in during this age, but most of the glory of that salvation is reserved for the future (the near future I believe).

The only way we can avoid being partakers of "the wrath of God [that] comes on the "sons of disobedience" is for us to be faithful to God, His Son, and the new covenant and to live as "sons of obedience" by the grace of God in Christ (the grace that includes the work of the Righteous, Holy Spirit of God who dwells in all born-again Christians). Yes, we will be forgiven for any sins we commit after we become born-again Christians if we sincerely repent, but we must make it top priority to live in the truth, righteousness, holiness, and love of God. This is the foundation and heartbeat of Christianity. God paid an infinite price to give us the victory over sin! For one thing, He hates sin! (We will go on to Eph. 5:8 after completing the following section that will help us understand Eph. 5: 3-7.))

COLOSSIANS 3:1-11 HAS MUCH IN COMMON WITH EPHESIANS 4:17-5:21. I'll quote COLOSSIANS 3:5-9, verses that are especially relevant for Eph. 5:3-7 (Colossians 1:15-3:17 are discussed verse-by-verse in a paper on my internet site): "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry [with these last five words, compare Eph. 5:3]. [(This double bracket dealing with Col. 3:5-9 goes on for twenty-five paragraphs. All of this information relates to the interpretation of Eph. 5:1-21, especially 5:3-7.) In the margin the NASB has, "Lit(erally) Put to death the members which are upon the earth." The NIV has, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." I believe the translation "put to death" is better. Paul is exhorting his Christian readers (including us) to make sure that they are living as those who have truly died to sin, to the old man/the flesh, and to Satan and his kingdom. Anything that remains of sin must be put to death now with top priority (cf., e.g., Col. 3:6-9; Rom. 6:6, 12-14; 8:12-14; Gal. 5:24; Eph. 4:22-32; James 1:21-23; and 1 Pet. 2:1).

Paul was undoubtedly making some reference to the members of our physical bodies with his use of the word "members" here in Col. 3:5 (as with his use of the word "body"

in Rom. 6:6; 7:24; and 8:13), but it was a rather loose reference (as it was in the verses just cited from Romans; it is clear that the apostle was not asking his readers to put to death their physical bodies or members of their physical bodies): Sometimes the apostle used the word "body" in the same non-literal sense that he often used the word "flesh," speaking of the "old man" (the NIV often translates "flesh" as "sinful nature"). ((I'll quote a paragraph from what J. B. Lightfoot says regarding "the members" here in verse 5, "Each person has a two fold moral personality. There is in him the 'old man,' and there is in him also 'the new' (verses 9, 10). The old man with all his members must be pitilessly slain [it cannot be annihilated during this age, but it must be kept from manifesting itself in sin, as we walk by the Holy Spirit through faith]. It is plain that [the members] here is used, like [man (speaking of the "old man")] in ver. 9, not physically, but morally. Our actual limbs may be either [of the earth] or [of heaven], according as they are made instruments for the world or for Christ: just as we...may identify ourselves with the [old man] or with the [new man] of our two fold potentiality. For this use of the physical, as a symbol of the moral of which it is the potential instrument, compare Matt. 5:29 ["If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you...."] ("Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon" [Zondervan, 1974 reprint], page 211).)) We live on the earth in physical bodies, bodies that enable us to function in the world below (on the earth). The members of the body are very often involved when sins are committed (cf. Rom. 6:13). It must be understood, however, that sin originates in the heart, not in the physical body (see Mark 7:20-23).

To put to death the members which are on the earth (Col. 3:5) means the same thing as putting to death (or crucifying) the old man/the flesh and the works of the old man/the flesh. The NIV has, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature." The bottom line of what the apostle Paul says here, as he so often says it (cf. Rom. 6:1, 2, 11, for example), is that Christians are supposed to be dead to all sin (in the sense they stop sinning, not that they cannot be tempted to sin, and not that they cannot sin), and if they still are sinning in any way, they must make it top priority to stop all sin now (by grace through faith). Continuing in sin is not an option; see Col. 3:6.

I'M GOING TO INCLUDE A LENGTHY FOOTNOTE (that I have in the paper on my internet site that includes Col. 1:15-3:17, under Col. 3:6) THAT DEALS (to some significant extent) WITH THE "WRATH OF GOD": Many Christians in our day speak only of the "love" of God; they have very little (if any) conception of His "wrath." I'll quote several sentences from David E. Garland on this topic ("Colossians and Philemon" [Zondervan, 1998], page 216). "A survey of faith maturity in Christians [apparently not limited to evangelical Christians] discovered that most believe that God is forgiving (97%) and loving (96%), but far fewer believe that God is judging (37%) or punishes those who do wrong (19%). [Footnote: Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, "The Teaching Church" ... (...Abingdon, 1993), page 44.] These Christians probably doubt that a God of such inclusive love could judge with such inflexible wrath. ... The best-selling book 'Conversations With God,' by Neale Donald Walsch [G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1996], represents the current opinion on God's wrath. It portrays a chummy God who patronizes sin, since there is no objective right and wrong. According to Walsch, God smiles on all that we do and only asks that we do our best. Paul's mention of the 'wrath

of God' presents an opportunity to help people recognize the reality of God's wrath and to disabuse them of common misunderstandings of it."

I discussed the love of God and the wrath of God in some detail, aiming for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches, as part of my study of Ephesians chapter 1 that is on my internet site. I'll include extensive excerpts from that study here: There's a lot of teaching around the body of Christ about God's unconditional love. I believe much of this teaching is simply wrong, and it can be dangerous. It goes beyond the balanced teaching of the Bible to tell people that God will always continue to love them just the same no matter what they believe or what they do. This out-of-balance teaching is one reason there's so little fear of God and so little repentance and motivation for righteousness and holiness in so many Christians.

Let's not see how far we can push the love and grace of God. It's not that we can in ourselves be worthy of, or earn, God's love, but if we continue to reject and disdain His love and grace [including His sanctifying grace], we will ultimately be confronted with His eternal wrath, not His eternal love. Compare, for example, Rom. 2:4-10; Gal. 5:19-21; 6:7-9; Eph. 2:3 ('children of wrath,' on the path that culminates in God's wrath in the day of His wrath); 5:1-7; and Col. 3:5-11. The Old Testament verses that spoke of God's never-ending love for Israel, by the way, did not cover those individuals who willfully (and without repentance) forsook their covenant with God. Sincere Christians who love God and are living for Him in His truth and His righteousness are not in danger of facing God's eternal wrath, but they can block the full flow of His experiential love through failing to live in the center of His will. Let's not settle for less than God's will for us - for His full glory, and for our sakes. If we don't make these things top priority, they will never come to pass. For one thing, we face strong opposition from the world, the flesh (the old man who wants to continue in sin), and the devil and his multitudinous hosts.

It's true, of course, that we must emphasize God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. (The devil and his hosts spend a lot of time attacking God's people, telling them that God doesn't love them, when He does; telling them they have committed the unpardonable sin, when they haven't; telling them they never can stop sinning, that God's grace isn't sufficient; etc.) But it's not acceptable to put all the emphasis here. It won't work! We need the full gospel (which includes the-balanced-truth-of-what-the-Bible-teaches gospel)! God knows our hearts; He knows if we are making Him and His Word top priority in our hearts. If we're not, we're going to have to make it top priority to change by His sufficient grace in Christ through faith.

...many Christians have accepted worldly ideas about what love means (the world of our day loves words like love, tolerance, and peace), ideas that substantially miss, and often directly contradict, dominant themes of the Bible. The primary problem that I am concerned with - and it is a very serious problem - is the idea that since God is love, He cannot have great wrath, eternal wrath, and He certainly cannot cast people into hell. This idea contradicts the Bible; it is also one of the main reasons that there is so little repentance and fear of God among so many Christians in our day. Why take the warnings of the Bible seriously?

Let's briefly consider John 3:16. This is a significant verse, but many read way too much into it and do not balance out what is said here with the rest of the verses in the passage (and the rest of the Bible). John 3:18, 36, for example, show that those who willfully reject the gospel are condemned already (that is, they are condemned from the time that they willfully reject the gospel, unless they later repent) and that the wrath of God (not the love of God) abides on them. In a very real sense, they have already had their final judgment. [I had a footnote, John 5:24 shows that it is also true, and it is a glorious truth indeed, that those who submit to the gospel in faith have already had their final judgment. This does not mean that they could not later reverse this judgment if they are foolish enough to turn away from their faith commitment to Christ and His salvation.] When God sent His Son, He knew what was in the hearts of all people. He knew that many were committed to evil and that they would not receive Christ or submit to the gospel in faith. He knew that Christ's coming would force such people to manifest what was in their hearts - Christ's coming to such people, or the gospel's coming to them, greatly increases their sinful status before God (see, e.g., John 3:19-21; 15:18-25).

For God to love mankind "unconditionally" would mean that His love would "not be conditioned" by (that is, it would have nothing to do with) what the people believed or what they did, or did not do, including repentance and faith in Christ. As I mentioned, in most ways this view is simply wrong. God's blessing all people with the sun and rain (Matt. 5:43) and, more importantly, His desire that all people repent and be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) are areas where it is appropriate to speak of His "unconditional love."

In this discussion about the love of God, I am not dealing with God's emotions. I am dealing almost entirely with His final (eternal) judgment of all people. Are we going to experience His eternal love, enjoying an eternal love relationship with Him, living in His presence in His eternal kingdom that is literally full of glory and abiding in all the blessings that He has prepared for those who love Him (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9)? Or, are we going to be totally separated from Him in the eternal lake of fire experiencing His eternal wrath? Even if He did continue to have feelings of love for the people He casts into hell, it would not affect their eternal destinies; according to the Bible, they will experience His eternal wrath, not His eternal love. There is an emotional component of love, but love is a lot more than emotions - love is an action word. If we want to experience the eternal, abiding love of God, we must believe in Him and His truth (which includes being submitted to Him and His truth from our hearts) and live the way He requires us to live (by the sanctifying grace of God in Christ through faith); we will be judged according to our works (cf., e.g., Rom. 2:2-13; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; 6:7-9; Eph. 5:3-7; and Rev. 22:11, 12). Our works demonstrate whether our faith is genuine, or not.

I'll quote the brief remarks I made regarding the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). This parable warns that although there were ten virgins at the beginning (they were all born-again Christians, who initially had oil in their lamps, which lamps were burning [Matt. 25:8]), only five of the virgins were ready when the bridegroom returned. Christ gave this teaching to exhort all Christians of the need to make it top priority to get ready,

and stay ready, for His return. The bridegroom says to the five foolish virgins, who were not ready for His return, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you." Those are not the kind of words we want to hear from Christ at the end. (We will not hear such words if we make God, His Son, His truth, His Spirit, His righteousness, and His kingdom top priority. In other words, we will not hear such words from Christ if we meet His "conditions" for salvation.) Those words spoken to the five foolish virgins hardly fit the idea of God's "unconditional," never-ending love. ... To face the wrath of God on judgment day will be quite the opposite of experiencing His love.

God's judgments *never* are arbitrary; He is a good God, and His judgments are *always* righteous. He is a God of great mercy, but there are, as there must be, definite limits to His mercy. His righteousness and His love for His people require that He eventually remove those who persist in sin and never will repent (including the devil and those who follow him); they cause chaos in His kingdom; they destroy divine order; they attack His people; etc.

James 4:4 speaks of people *making themselves enemies of God* by becoming friends of the world; James 4:6 speaks of God's *being opposed to the proud*. Neither of these expressions goes with abiding in the love of God.

Luke chapter 15, with its three parables (including the parable of the prodigal son), strongly emphasizes the point that heaven rejoices when sinners repent. This chapter was dealing, for the most part, with the repentance of backslidden children of God, but I believe it has much application for the repentance of all mankind. The parable of the prodigal son deals with a prodigal son who repents; it powerfully illustrates the point that God greatly loved this son and strongly desired his repentance. What about those prodigal sons who never do repent? ... It seems clear that those who do not repent will not be able to experience the Father's love, and especially not after the age of grace is over and the final judgment has taken place.

(I'll add a long paragraph here that deals, to a significant extent, with repentance.) Joseph Prince, in "Destined to Reign" (Harrison House, 2007), discusses the prodigal son on pages 153-156. He says that the prodigal son did not repent. He says, "We all know that the son was not returning to the father's house because he had realized his mistake. He was returning because he was hungry!" Prince says a lot of other things that I disagree with in this book. On pages 134, 135, for example, he argues that "the Holy Spirit never convicts you of your sin. He NEVER comes to point out your faults" (page 134). I'll quote a few sentences from what I said on pages 2 and 3 of my 47 page paper titled, "Some Comments on 'Destined to Reign' by Joseph Prince" that is on my internet site (I recommend reading that paper; I should mention that I didn't write the paper to attack Joseph Prince. I said for example, "I respect him as a sincere evangelical Christian pastor, who loves God and His Word, who wants to live for Him and to be a great blessing to the members of his very large church in Singapore and to Christians around the world."): "Joseph says Christians (true Christians) are automatically righteous and holy. [I had a footnote: "When you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are made holy and righteous by His blood once for all" (page

12). "God sees you as righteous as Jesus himself" (page 18).] He argues against what 'conventional theology' teaches, that the New Testament speaks of a 'practical righteousness,' where the word righteousness is used of doing right and keeping God's law. 'You are either righteous or you are not. There is no such thing as first having "positional righteousness" and then having to maintain that through "practical righteousness." You are the righteousness of God in Christ, period!' (page 27)." (Passages like Romans chapter 6, where the word "righteousness" is used 5 times, and 1 John 3:7 suffice to show that what Joseph says about righteousness is wrong.) I was surprised to learn that Prince doesn't believe that Christians can lose their salvation. And lastly, I'll quote part of what he said about repentance, quoting from pages 8 and 9 of my paper: "Joseph says that he disagrees with the idea that we should preach on repentance and with the idea that we must confess our sins to be forgiven: On page 232 (in chapter 18) Joseph says, 'nevertheless, there are still people who insist that we have to preach on repentance [to exhort Christians in sin to repent]. Well, I disagree. I think we should do it God's way - preach the goodness of God and allow the goodness of God to lead people to repentance.' Joseph makes some valid points in that chapter, but he certainly overstates the case and misses the balanced truth of what the New Testament (and the Old Testament) teaches about repentance here. God (and His spokesmen) frequently calls Christians to repent throughout the New Testament. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, for example, the Lord Jesus powerfully called for the majority of the Christians in several of the seven cities to repent, or lose their salvation. And Jesus made it quite clear that He still considered them to be part of His church when He called them to repent, or else. He told the Christians at Ephesus, for example, that He would remove their lampstand if they didn't repent. The fact that they still had their lampstand showed that they were part of His church (see Rev. 1:20)." (See my paper "Once Saved, Always Saved? on Revelation chapters 2 and 3.)

Repentance is not optional, and if we put off repenting while clinging to some out-of-balance understanding of God's love, or some other error, we are making a big mistake. The time will come when it is too late to repent.

I winced as I read parts of what Clark Pinnock, a contemporary evangelical scholar (now deceased), said in his article written to advocate "annihilationism" and to reject the traditional view that God will literally send people to eternal torment ("Four Views on Hell" [Zondervan, 1992], pages 135-178). This is an important topic in its own right, but the primary reason that I wanted to quote from his article here is that Pinnock bases his rejection of the traditional view of hell to a significant extent (as the quotations will show) on the mistaken idea that such a view is incompatible with God's love, goodness, and justice. Something must be wrong with our ideas about God's love, goodness, and justice if our ideas force us to reject what the Bible says about His wrath, vengeance, and hell. We cannot afford to challenge God by saying that if the traditional view of hell is true, then God is not a God of love, goodness, and justice. "...what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing His wrath on us? ... Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?" (Rom. 3:5, 6).

His view, Pinnock says, unlike the traditional view, "does not portray God as being a vindictive and sadistic punisher" (page 137). ... "Let us begin with the moral problems surrounding the traditional view, which depicts God acting in a way that contradicts his goodness and offends our moral sense. According to Christian theology the nature of God is revealed in Jesus Christ and shown to be boundlessly merciful. God loves the whole world. His heart is to invite sinners to a festive meal (Matt. 8:11). He is a forgiving and loving Father toward them (Luke 15:11-32), not a cruel and sadistic torturer as the traditional view of hell would suggest. ..." (page 149). But what about those who spurn His mercy, who reject Him as God, who fight against His righteousness and divine order, and who join the devil in his never-ending hatred of God and rebellion against Him, not to mention attacking the people of God? ... I am sure that many Christians do not have an adequate understanding of the seriousness of sin. Perhaps none of us adequately understand its seriousness.

It is a very serious matter when a high-level being like Satan rebels against God and is followed by a third of the angels, by the demons, and then (to a significant extent) by mankind. Consider the infinite price that God paid in the incarnation and atoning death of His unique Son, the Lamb of God, to dethrone sin and Satan and all who follow him and to save those who will repent and submit to His plan of salvation. I am totally convinced that when God's final judgment is over, after the great-white-throne judgment, our hearts will be full of praise and thanksgiving - with no complaints or suggestions on how He could have done things better. ...

Many Christians have accepted worldly, far-from-the-Biblical-balance ideas of God's love. I am afraid that many who call themselves Christians are not interested in the God of the Bible; some are only interested in a caricature of God derived from what man (sometimes with the *help* of the devil, even as the devil *helped* Eve see the "truth" in the garden) thinks God must be like to be acceptable to man, or to be worthy of the worship of man.

There are many things that we do not know or fully understand (at least not yet); the Bible has not revealed them to us, but I feel confident that when the devil, evil angels, demons, and many people are cast into the eternal lake of fire it will not be because God has a hard time forgiving, far from it. I believe the dominant factor will be that those persons never will repent, and it would be impossible for them to have a place in God's eternal kingdom without causing perpetual havoc. They would not love God, or His truth, righteousness, holiness, people, etc. They would not want to have a place in God's eternal kingdom on His terms, not that they will want the alternative.

We very often hear that there must not be a God, or even if there is a God, He must not be a good, loving God, because of all the problems in the world, problems like hunger, warfare, strife, natural disasters, plagues, and sicknesses of the inner man and the body. Some think that God should make everything go smooth on the earth while mankind, for the most part, continues to reject Him, His Son, His truth (His Word), and His righteousness. And that is only half of the problem, not only do people reject God and substitute things like secular humanism, evolution, and the god of science in His

place, but they typically, whether directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly, submit to and fellowship with Satan and his hosts through things like false religions, the occult, psychic powers, and demon worship, things which are forbidden in the Bible. People cannot be neutral; if we do not pursue God with all our hearts, based on His Word, we will be influenced by the devil to one degree or another. He is the "god of this world."

The Bible promises that God will come and make things right on the earth; the day of judgment is coming. Our top priority must be to get ready and stay ready for that day. Then we will be able to judge God and straighten Him out - No! It doesn't work like that! We will be the ones who are judged. Every time we take a stand against God and His truth and righteousness, we hurt ourselves. (This is the end of the lengthy footnote. Now we will continue with the discussion of Col. 3:5-9 [in the verse-by-verse study of Eph. 5:1-21], starting with Col. 3:6.)] (6) FOR IT IS BECAUSE OF THESE THINGS [these sinful things] THAT THE WRATH OF GOD WILL COME UPON THE SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE [my emphasis], (7) and in them ["these [sinful] things"] you also once walked, when you were living in them [before they became born-again Christians]. [[I'll quote Eph. 2:1, 2: "And you were dead [spiritually dead] in your trespasses and sins, (2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit [the devil] who is now working in the SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE [my emphasis]."] (8) But now [Or, "So now," now that you have become born-again Christians, and in light of the fact that "the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience"] you also, put them all aside [[(This double bracket goes on for two paragraphs.) I would translate "put off all these" with the KJV and NKJV. The Greek behind "put off" or "put aside" is an aorist imperative of the verb "apotithemi." An aorist participle of a different verb ("apekduomai") is used in verse 9 for laying aside the old man, but the meaning of the two verbs is essentially the same here. The aorist imperative fits the idea of putting off (or, putting aside) everything sinful once-for-all and completely, and the aorist participle fits the idea of having put off (or, having laid aside) the old man with its evil practices once-for-all and completely. The Greek participle at the beginning of verse 10 ("having put on," or the equivalent) is an aorist too; it fits the idea of having put on the new man once-for-all and completely. If we put off the old man once-for-all and completely and put on the new man once-for-all and completely and are living in a state of holiness, which is the ideal state to which we are called, we still need to keep growing in Christ (cf., e.g., 2 Cor. 3:18).

The Greek ("ta panta") behind "them all" (in Col. 3:8) literally means "the all things." "The all things" include all the sinful things his readers had been doing before they became Christians and all the sinful things they were doing or could potentially do now. The apostle goes on in Col. 3:8 to give a partial list of sinful things that must be put off or put aside, which is the equivalent of putting them to death in Col. 3:5. It was understood that everything that was sin (by God's definition), everything that was part of the old man (cf., e.g., Col. 3:3, 9) was to be put off/put to death once-for-all and completely. In the following verse (Col. 3:9) the apostle adds lying to the list (cf. Eph. 4:25). I believe it is obvious that the apostle didn't mean we should gradually reduce our lying, or any other sin. These things need to be put to death once-for-all and completely. This is the Christian ideal, and we need to think this way in our hearts (faith is of the

heart). (Now I'll quote the rest of Col. 3:8 and then quote 3:9.)): anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. (9) Do not lie to one another, since you have laid aside [or, put off; see under Col. 3:8] the old self [old man] with its evil practices." (This completes the lengthy digression where I quoted and discussed Col. 3:5-9.)

(Now we come to Eph. 5:8 in this verse-by-verse study of Eph. 5:1-21.)); **(8) for you were formerly darkness** [cf. Eph. 4:18], **but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light** [[The light includes the truth, goodness, righteousness, and holiness of God. Christians are required to walk in the light on a continuous basis (cf., e.g., 1 John 1:5-7). This is a great privilege! The "darkness" includes spiritual death, all sin, deception and lies (not the truth), and Satan and his kingdom.]] **(9) (for the fruit of the light** [the fruit that the light produces; this is comparable with the fruit of the Spirit of Gal. 5:22, 23] **consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth** [being doers of the truth is included here]), **(10) trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.** [[I would translate, "approving" or "demonstrating" instead of "trying to learn." For one thing, the "goodness and righteousness" of the gospel isn't that complicated. Note what the apostle says in Eph. 5:17, for example, "So then do not be foolish, but UNDERSTAND WHAT THE WILL OF GOD IS" [my emphasis]. When we walk by God's Word and by His Spirit (which includes thinking in our hearts in line with God's Word by the Spirit, with a renewed mind [cf., e.g., Rom. 8:5-9; 12:2, 3; Eph. 4:23 (see my article "Ephesians 4:17-32; Righteousness, Holiness, and Victory Over Sin" on my internet site)], we will think right, thereby "approving" the things that please God and live right, thereby "demonstrating" the things that please God. We must think right in our hearts to live right. We think right and live right by the saving, sanctifying grace of God in Christ, which includes all the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit.]] **(11) Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds** [or, works] **of darkness** [[The "unfruitful [sinful] deeds [works] of darkness" are contrasted with "the fruit of the light" of verse 9.], **but instead even expose them** [[See verse 13. The "works of darkness" are exposed (at least to some extent) when we "walk as children of light" (verse 8), doing works of the light, which includes speaking the truth.

I'll quote a few sentences from what Peter T. O'Brien says here ("The Letter to the Ephesians" [Eerdmans, 1999], page 371): "The conduct of the children of light will shine as a beacon to others, revealing evil deeds for what they are [and righteousness for what it is]. To interpret the verb along these lines of exposing sin for what it is does not imply that Christians should remain silent or fail to speak out against evil. But the particular point being made here is that of living a godly lifestyle and showing evil to be evil." It must be made clear that the righteous lifestyle of Christians comes, by grace, as a result of repenting and submitting (in faith) to the gospel of new-covenant salvation offered to mankind by the God of creation, the God of the Bible.]; **(12) for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.** ["In secret" goes with the darkness and the "deeds [works] of darkness."] **(13) But all things become visible** ["are made manifest" (KJV; NKJV); and we are able to see that those things are evil; they are aligned with the darkness, which totally contrasts with the

light, which includes God's truth, righteousness, and holiness] **when they are exposed by the light** [[The Greek verb "elegxo" that is translated "when they are exposed" here (it is a present participle here) and "expose [them]" in verse 11 includes the idea of showing that the works of darkness are evil; they are seen in contrast with the works of the light, for one thing. The BAGD Greek Lexicon (under "elegxo"), commenting on the use of this verb in Eph. 5:11 and 13 says: "the darkness-light scheme suggests exposure, with implication of censure." I'll quote the definitions given for this Greek verb in the "Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament" by Barclay Newman (in the back of the "United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament"): "*show (someone his) fault or error, convince (someone) of (his) fault or error; show (something) up for what it is; prove guilty, condemn; rebuke, reprove.*"], **for everything that becomes visible** [or, everything that is made manifest] **is light**. [[Everything that becomes visible/manifest through Christians "[walking] as children of light" (verse 8), including being able to see that the "works of darkness" are evil and that the things of God, including His truth, righteousness, holiness, goodness, divine order, love, etc. are totally true and righteous and good (in total contrast to the things associated with the kingdom of darkness), IS LIGHT - these things are associated with the "light" of God and His kingdom of light. The apostle is not saying that those who are confronted with the light through Christians walking in the light will become light, but it is understood that some will go on to become Christians and become light in the full sense pictured in verse 8. Verse 14 goes on to invite those who will repent to become Christians. Others will, of course, react against the light with hatred, etc.

These last words of verse 13 are difficult, but this translation of the NASB (or the equivalent) fits the Greek perfectly in this context. The translations of the NIV ("for it is light that makes everything visible"); the NKJV ("for whatever makes manifest is light"); and the KJV ("for whatever doth make manifest is light") seem far less reasonable.

I'll quote what William Hendricksen says here ("Galatians and Ephesians" [Baker Book House, 1979], page 234): "That is, whatever, whether attitudes, words, practices, etc., is made manifest by having been thus contrasted [contrasted with the Christians "walking as children of light" (5:8)] loses its hidden character, takes on the nature of light, and is seen for what it really is. ... They are made to see how great their sins and miseries are; hence, how desperately they need a radical change of life. The transition to the next line [next verse] is very natural."] **(14) For this reason** [Now the unbelievers have been confronted with the truth about sin and God's righteousness and holiness through salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those whose hearts are open to God have begun to see the light.] **it says, 'Awake sleeper, And arise from the dead** [The unbelievers were spiritually dead; they were still associated with the kingdom of darkness. They need to repent and submit (in faith) to God, His Son, and the gospel of new-covenant salvation.], **And Christ will shine on you** [[Christ's shining on them, which would enable them to become obedient children of the light, would result from their repenting and submitting to the gospel (in faith).

I'll quote a sentence and a paragraph from what Peter T. O'Brien says under this verse ("The Letter to the Ephesians" [Eerdmans, 1999]): "The imperatives address the non-

Christian, as a *sleeper*, to *wake up*, and *rise from the dead*" (page 376). "Once again Paul draws a sharp distinction between the life and behaviour of those who are God's holy people (verse 3) and the surrounding society. The dominant imagery throughout the passage is that of light and darkness; there is no middle ground or shades of grey. The apostle wants his Christian readers to realize that they are to live by values that are diametrically opposed to the standards of their contemporary world, values that include sexual purity and wholesome speech. Instead of being corrupted by the surrounding darkness, believers are to exercise their influence on it. Paul adopts no defeatist attitude towards the society around him. Christ is the light who has summoned the readers to wake up and rise from the dead. He has shone upon them so that they have become light in the Lord. As children of light their lives are to shine as a beacon, exposing the darkness for what is really is. Some who sit in darkness may be attracted to the light and even choose to enter it" (page 377).]' **(15)** [The NASB, NIV, and NKJV start a new paragraph here. These words that follow were not aimed at those spoken to in the saying/hymn quoted in verse 14; they were aimed at the Christian readers of this epistle.] **Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise** [[Compare Eph. 1:8, 17; Col. 1:9, 28; 3:16; 4:5. "Wise" Christians (and we must all be wise Christians; consider, for example, the outcomes for the five wise/prudent virgins and for the five foolish virgins in Matt. 25:1-13; cf., e.g., Rom. 16:19) will always make it top priority to always live in the center of God's will, in His truth, righteousness, holiness, love, etc., and all the more so realizing that "the days are evil" (5:16), and all the more so yet for those who are living very near the time of Christ's return and the day of judgment. Those early Christians thought the Lord Jesus would return soon, and it seems clear that God wanted them to live in the light of Christ's near return (cf., e.g., Matt. 24:34; Rom. 13:11-14; James 5:8; 1 Pet. 4:7, 17; 1 John 2:18; Rev. 1:3; 3:11; 22:7, 10, 12, 20), but it seems that our generation is living at the very end of this age. Our generation probably is the last generation, but even if it isn't, we must always live in the light of the fact that we must get ready for and then stay ready for the return of the Lord Jesus with top priority! He is coming! That's for sure!]], **(16) making the most of your time** [[The KJV and NKJV translate "redeeming the time," and the margin of the NASB has this translation in the margin. Colossians 4:5 shows that one reason we need to redeem the time is our witness before unbelievers. I'll quote a sentence from what Frank Thielman says here ("Ephesians" [Baker Academic], page 356): "[Paul's] readers are to buy the present time out of its slavery to evil and to use it instead in ways that are 'pleasing to the Lord' (Eph. 5:10)." Even as we are redeemed out of the kingdom of sin, darkness, and demons, our time must be redeemed (cf. Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18). The translation "making the most of your time" of the NASB communicates the right idea.]], **because the days are evil.** [[Since the days are evil, we must make it top priority to be dead to sin/evil and to live for God in His truth, righteousness, holiness, etc. by the grace of God in Christ through faith. For one thing, the New Testament makes it very clear that born-again Christians can backslide. To the extent we would not redeem the time, but use it for sin/evil, we would violate our covenant with God; we would hurt the body of Christ and bring a reproach on God and His Son; we would hurt ourselves; and we would not be good witnesses for God, His Son, and the gospel.

We must make God, His Son, His gospel, and His kingdom top priority and to have zero tolerance for sin/evil in our lives. The more we understand the supreme importance of being faithful to God by His grace, and the facts that the days are evil and this life is short, and all the more so if the Lord Jesus is going to return very soon, the more it is obvious that we must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33). We must love God; His Son; His salvation; His righteousness; His kingdom with top priority. We don't have to worry about loving these things too much. To the extent we love God we will also fulfill our obligations in this world.]] **(17) So then do not be foolish** [[It is foolish to not live 100 percent for God in His truth, righteousness, etc. by His sufficient grace in Christ Jesus. It is foolish to leave any room for sin. I'll quote Rom. 13:14: "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." In other words, don't leave and room for sin.]] **but understand what the will of the Lord is.** [[There is widespread agreement that "the Lord" here is the Lord Jesus. In general God's will isn't complicated, and He certainly isn't hiding His will from any Christians who are motivated to know His will and to do His will. God always makes His grace available to know His will and to do His will (cf., e.g., Phil. 2:12, 13).]] **(18) And do not get drunk with wine** [cf. 1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:19-21], **for that is dissipation** [For one thing, getting drunk drags you down instead of building you up, and it opens the door for all kinds of sin/evil.] **but be filled with** [or, by] **the Spirit** [[The present tense of the Greek verb ("pleroo") translated "be filled" fits the idea of being filled on a continuous basis, staying filled. (In Eph. 3:16 the apostle prayed that God would grant to his readers, including us, "to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." The Holy Spirit enables us [but He certainly doesn't override our will (the desire of our heart) and force us] to think right and to be strong in faith, righteousness, holiness, etc.)

We are not automatically filled with the Spirit on a continuous basis any more than we automatically walk by the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:16) on a continuous basis. It is rather easy to walk by the flesh and let the old man manifest itself in sin, but that is totally unacceptable. We cannot be successful Christians if we are not filled with the Holy Spirit and walking by the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:16) on a continuous basis, which includes walking in line with the Word of God on a continuous basis, by faith. To the extent we are not walking by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis we will be walking in the flesh and the door will be open for the old man (with the eager assistance of the world and the demons) to sin.

Just wasting time is sinful if we not doing the things that God is calling us to do. God and His will must always be our top priority. This doesn't mean that we will always be living on a mountain top, or that we won't have trials, or that we don't have obligations to fulfill in this world (even though we must not be part of the world in any sinful ways [cf. John 15:18, 19; 17:11-19]).

I'll quote a little from what Klyne Snogras says under Eph. 5:18-21 ("Ephesians" [Zondervan, 1996], page 309): "... We are so fearful of works-righteousness [we cannot be saved by our works of righteousness, but we must have the righteous works that the grace of God, which includes the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, enables us to

do] or of synergism [which means "work together"; we must understand that we are saved 100 percent by the grace of God in Christ, but we must cooperate with His grace by faith; we must, for example, walk by the Spirit of God on a continuous basis; faith is active, not passive] that we have increased passivity. The New Testament does not share our fear, and God does not perform magic on passive instruments. Salvation is the work of God, but synergism is capable of being understood positively. [Snodgras has a footnote: "See Philippians 2:12-13 or James 2:22."] God calls for the human will to respond to his work and to be actively engaged with him. We must make choices for life with God if we are to appropriate this text, choices that involve the way we use our time, that open ourselves to God, and that make us willing to be transformed.

The Spirit's role in this cannot be overemphasized, for Christianity is a religion of the Spirit. All we are and have is his work. The Spirit is not an optional add-on, a second work of grace [If the Spirit of God does not dwell in us we are not Christians (Rom. 8:9), but this doesn't mean that the Spirit of God cannot still fill us in special ways (cf. Acts 4:31) or distribute gifts to Christians that they did not have before (1 Cor. 12:7-11; 1 Tim. 4:14). So too, Christians can open their hearts and minds to dimensions of the Spirit's work that they had not be open to and receive them, including the powerful sanctifying work of the Spirit and the charismatic dimension of the Spirit's work, and big changes can take place. In some cases it is probably more yielding to the Spirit's work than receiving something new from the Spirit.], or a privilege of the elite. Rather he is the agent of God's work in the world and is both the source and proof of conversion."], **(19) speaking to one another in psalms** [Old Testament psalms are at least included] **and hymns** [songs that the early Christians used] **and spiritual songs** [probably referring to songs that were inspired by the Holy Spirit, which would include singing in languages (tongues) given by the Holy Spirit; in 1 Cor. 14:15 the apostle Paul spoke of "[singing] with the spirit [by the Holy Spirit]" as contrasted with "[singing] with the mind [or, understanding," which for us would be in English.], **singing and making melody with your heart** [singing, praise, worship, thanksgiving, etc. must involve our hearts] **to the Lord** [[There is widespread agreement that "the Lord" here is the Lord Jesus Christ. I'll quote Col. 3:16, 17: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you [plural], with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs [They would be able to teach and admonish one another because of the truth contained in the words they were singing. It is very important that we do not sing words that do not line up with the truth of God. This is a big problem in our day.], singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (17) Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."]]; **(20) always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God even the Father** [[Cf., e.g., Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:18. The Lord Jesus Christ is fully deity with God the Father (and God the Spirit), and we worship the Son with the Father (and the Spirit), but the Son is subordinate to God the Father in His role. See the four articles/papers (on my internet site) that deal with the Trinity: "Who Do We worship?: Jesus-Only Worship Songs"; "Who Do We Pray To?"; More on the Trinity"; and "The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son."]]; **(21) and be subject** ["Be subject" is a present participle in the Greek, as are "speaking," "singing" and "making melody" in verse 19 and "giving thanks" in verse 20; we could translate "being subject,"

or "submitting."]] **to one another in the fear of Christ.** [[The things mentioned in verses 19-21 are manifestations that flow from being filled with the Spirit/walking by the Spirit. It is also true that doing these things will enhance our ability to walk by the Spirit. These words, starting with "being subject," or the equivalent, serve to introduce what the apostle will go on to say in 5:22-6:9 about the wives being subject to their husbands, children being obedient to their parents, and slaves to their masters. All of these submitting relationships (submitting in the ways ordained by God) are related to Christian households, which must function in divine order. The New Testament doesn't speak of husbands submitting to their wives, parents to their children, or masters to their slaves, but it does speak (as we'll discuss later; and this is quite important too) that all Christians must be humble before one another, and love one another. (I recommend the commentary by Peter T. O'Brien, "The Letter to the Ephesians," for more details on Eph. 5:21.)

By adding the words "in the fear of Christ" Paul emphasized the need for his readers to submit to his exhortations to submit (or, obey) that follow in 5:22-6:9. For one thing, the apostle knew that there would be some opposition to what he goes on to say regarding wives being submitted to their husbands. (See 1 Cor. 11:1-16, for example; 1 Corinthians chapter 11 is discussed verse-by-verse in a paper on my internet site.) It is rather easy to walk in the flesh (instead of the Spirit) and manifest pride and disobedience, for example. The Bible, very much including the New Testament, teaches that we should be afraid to sin against God or His Son (cf., e.g., Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:5; Acts 9:31; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:17). We must be motivated by our love for God, but we (at least most of us) also need, on occasion, to be motivated by a healthy, necessary fear of God.

It is important to see that verse 21 is closely connected with the verses that follow (5:22-6:9), even as it was tied to the preceding verses (15-20), especially verses 18-20. (Verses 22-24 are even part of the same sentence with verse 21 in the Greek. The sentence starts with verse 18 and continues through verse 24 in the Greek.) As Paul continued in the following verses, he gave three examples where submission to authorities ordained by God was required in the Body of Christ. First he dealt with the submission of wives to their husbands. I'll quote Eph. 5:22-25: "*Wives, be subject* [The words "be subject" are in italics because the verb must be understood from its use in verse 21, which demonstrates that verse 21 is closely connected with the verses that follow. If the words "be subject" (or words with an equivalent meaning) were not supplied in italics, it would be even more obvious that Paul was going to give an example of what he meant by "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."]] to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (23) For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. (24) But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything." Compare, for example, Col. 3:18; 1 Cor. 11:3; 14:34, 35; Titus 2:5; and 1 Pet. 3:1.

It is necessary to understand that wives being submitted to their husbands isn't going to produce the results intended by God (divine order) if the husbands don't do the things

required of them, including what the apostle said in Eph. 5:25, "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." Some Christians in our day say that this teaching about submission of the wife to her husband has no relevance for our day, but I don't believe God agrees. God's opinion is the only one that matters. However, there is a very definite need for us to seek God for His will in the details of applying submission in our day.

Ephesians 5:22-33, which deals with the husband-wife relationship, is a very interesting and important passage. For one thing, it puts a high priority on Christians living in a "holy and blameless" manner through the salvation that flows from the all-important atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:25-27). As I mentioned Eph. 5:22-33 is discussed in my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ" and my e-book, "Righteousness, Holiness, and Victory Over Sin." (Both books are available at amazon.com.)

In Eph. 6:1-4 Paul dealt parent-child relationships, including the need for the children to obey and honor their parents in the Lord. In Eph. 6:5-9 he dealt with the master-slave relationships (cf. Titus 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18).

I'll quote what the apostle said to the masters and slaves in Eph. 6:5-9: "Slaves, be obedient [obedience goes with submission] to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ, (6) not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. (7) With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, (8) knowing whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. [All of us need to listen to what the apostle said in verses 5-8; for one thing, we are all slaves/servants of Christ.] (9) And masters, do the same to them [to the slaves], and give up threatening, knowing that both their master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him [which includes the idea that God certainly doesn't give the master the liberty to mistreat those under him because he is the master; the master must answer to the Master for what he does, or doesn't do]."

No Christian is permitted to abuse/misuse the authority God has given them. This is a serious matter! We will all have to answer to God. Authority under God brings responsibility; it does not give a person the right to manifest pride, or any other sin; we are all required to walk in love, to be humble, and to promote true Christian unity in the Body of Christ; authority does not make one person better than another. (The Lord Jesus Christ is subordinate to God the Father in His role (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 11:3; 15:25-27; and Rev. 1:6; 3:12), but He is fully deity and He isn't inferior.) As I mentioned, it is rather easy to sin, but sin (if it really is sin) is a serious matter.

Most Christian commentators that I have looked at (and I have looked at more than thirty) believe the apostle Paul was exhorting all his readers to have a mutual submission to one another in verse 21. I don't believe that interpretation fits this context well (especially the link between verse 21 and 22 and the following verses), and the Greek verb ("hupotasso") isn't used of a mutual submission in any of the 37 other uses

of this verb in the New Testament. It is used of being subject to those in legitimate positions of authority.

I don't believe the apostle was exhorting all his Christian readers to be submitted to all Christians in verse 21. For one thing, that tends to dilute what the apostle will go on to say about the need for submission to those that God has put in authority over us as he continues, and (as I mentioned) Paul even included the words "in the fear of Christ" in verse 21. I doubt that he would have used those words if he was only speaking of a mutual submission that would be quite limited in scope. Paul didn't exhort the husbands to be subject to their wives in the following verses, or the parents to their children, or the masters to their slaves, but he would, and did, exhort all Christians to walk in love toward, and to be humble before, all the other members of the Body of Christ.

The New Testament frequently speaks of these things. I'll quote Eph. 4:2, 3, for example, "WITH ALL HUMILITY [my capitalization for emphasis here and later in this verse] and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another IN LOVE, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." I won't cite any more examples on love, since it is emphasized so much in the New Testament. On humility, see, for example, 1 PETER 5:5, 6 ("You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders [In 1 Pet. 5:1-4 Peter spoke of "elders" who have been given authority to exercise oversight; in verse 3 he says to the elders, "nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."], AND ALL OF YOU , CLOTHE YOURSELVES WITH HUMILITY TOWARD ONE ANOTHER, FOR GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE [my capitalization.]); COLOSSIANS 3:12-15 ("So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, HUMILITY [my capitalization here and later in this verse], gentleness and patience, (13) bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you. (14) Beyond all these things *PUT ON LOVE*, which is the perfect bond of unity."

Leaders have authority, sometimes significant authority, from God, but they are required to be humble and to walk in love toward those (in one sense) under them. The Lord Jesus Christ has total authority, but He is humble toward us ("Take my yoke upon you [which goes with His authority over us] and learn from Me, for I am gentle and HUMBLE in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" [Matt. 11:29, 30]), and He loves us; but He could not subject Himself to us.

The New Testament makes it clear that God gives authority to ministers and leaders that He sets in the Body of Christ; we are required to respect and submit to those ministries where applicable (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 16:15, 16; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; 1 Thess. 2:6; 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 2:15; 1 Pet. 5:1-5 [verse 5 includes the words directed to all Christians, "clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble; cf. Prov. 3:34; James 4:6]). For one thing, we are responsible to make sure the ministers we submit to are accurately teaching the truth of the Word of God and are walking in line with the truth.

The apostle Paul also spoke of the need for Christians to be subject to the civil authorities (Rom. 13:1, 5; cf. 1 Pet. 2:13-15). We must understand, of course, that we cannot obey civil authorities if they tell us that we are not permitted to believe in or worship God, for example.

May the will of God be fully accomplished through this paper, and His people be edified!

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