



Sunday School Lesson
Eph. 4:25-5:21
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The Setting of the Passage

Before legitimate sense can be made from a scripture passage, one must understand, as much as possible, the historical setting that provides a foundation for giving meaning to the words of the text. Then, the Bible student needs to carefully consider the context of the passage. That is, how these verses fit into the overarching message of the scripture book. As has been said, “A text without a context is a pretext!”

Historical Setting:

The book of Ephesians is traditionally understood as a circular letter from Paul while he was imprisoned during the last phase of his ministry before martyrdom, sometime during the late 50s to the early 60s. Most often the place of imprisonment has been considered to be Rome (61-62 AD), but other possibilities exist, mainly during the period of imprisonment in Caesarea Philippi before being shipped to Rome (cf. Acts 23:23-26:32; 58-59 AD). For details of this see <http://cranfordville.com/paul-chr.htm> under Paul’s Final Period of Ministry and also [.../paul-pris.htm](http://cranfordville.com/paul-pris.htm).

By circular letter is meant that this document was carried by Tychicus (Eph. 5:21-22), an associate of Paul, first to Ephesus where it was read to the various house church groups over the city. Then, he carried the letter to other nearby towns, such as Colossae etc., where the letter was also read to the different house church groups. The indication of this is found in the absence of the words “in Ephesus” at 1:1 (ἐν Ἐφέσῳ) in some of the earliest and most important copies of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament (P⁴⁶ & B etc.). The reader of these kinds of ancient Greek letters would simply insert orally the appropriate geographical indication when reading this part of the text.

The Christian community at Ephesus had its beginnings with a brief stop by Paul at the end of the second missionary (Acts 18:18-22), where Priscilla and Aquila stayed behind and developed the work in the early 50s. On the third missionary journey, Paul spent over two years in ministry (Acts 19:8,10; 20:31) from about 53 to 54 AD. In the traditional understanding of Ephesians, Paul is now writing this letter to them either from Caesarea (58-59 AD) or from Rome (61-62 AD).

The Christian community at Ephesus enjoyed a lengthy ministry from the apostle Paul, and also from the apostle John who spent most of his later years (60s to 90s) in ministry there. The Christian movement gradually made significant impact on the city and by the third century AD had become a major center of Christian activity. Thus the work of Paul and John laid an important foundation for a witness for Christ that would last for hundreds of years in this area.



Literary Context:

Where do these verses fall in the overarching message of the scripture document? Literary context is crucial for correct interpretation! This is a major reason for following the natural boundaries of 4:25 through 5:21, rather than the falsely divided out section 4:29-5:10. Such slicing of partial sections of natural units of thought expression violates one of the most basic principles of scripture interpretation! And usually leads to the reprehensible proof-texting approach to Bible study that Baptists accuse cultic groups of doing. For us to engage in the same thing is just as reprehensible.

Now for the literary setting of our passage. The Ephesian letter follows ancient letter writing patterns reasonably close and thus falls into the following divisions:

Praescriptio (introductory materials): 1:1-2

The sender, recipients and greeting are contained in these initial two verses.

Proem (prayer expressions): 1:3-23

Comprised of two major sections, this passage begins with an eloquent praise to God in one long sentence in the Greek (1:3-14), and then moves to a more traditional prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for the readers (1:15-23).

Body of the letter: 2:1-6:22

The first major segment (2:1-3:21) focuses on the marvelous redemptive work of God through Christ Jesus that has lifted us out of sin and into spiritual union and fellowship with Almighty God. This is brought to a grand climax with another doxology of praise in 3:14-21.

The second major segment (4:1-6:22) focuses on moral exhortation, technically known as paranesis. The 'how we should live' emphasis here flows naturally from the 'who we are spiritually' first section in chapters two and three. Christian living has to be based upon spiritual relationship to the Heavenly Father for it to be authentic.

This second major division of the letter body falls into several natural units of text material, known as pericopes: (1) 4:1-16 (Christian unity as the collective Body of Christ); (2) 4:17-24 (The Old and New Ways of Living); (3) 4:25-5:5 (Guidelines for the New Way of Living); (4) 5:6-21 (Walking as Children of Light); (5) 5:22-6:9 (Living as a Christian Family); (6) 6:10-22 (Doing Battle with Evil).

Conclusio: 6:23-24

The concluding prayer of blessing for peace and grace.

For further details see <http://cranfordville.com/letlstp.htm>.

With this perspective in view, it now becomes clearer what our passage, 4:25 - 5:21, is trying to say both to its ancient readers as well as to modern readers. For an abbreviated version of this section, see Colossians 3:1-17.

Two emphases on how to live day by day as a Christian are the focal point of 4:25-5:5 and 5:6-21. But these emphases are based on the concepts set forth in the preceding two passages. And this in turn rests on the marvelous depiction of spiritual experience in Christ set forth in 2:1-3:21. In 4:1-16, we find the apostle pleading with us as Christians "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called..." This has to do with working together with fellow Christians in harmony (vv. 2-6), and utilizing the full measure of God's gift of grace to us (vv. 7-16). This naturally leads to the next emphasis in 4:17-24 where the pre-Christian pagan life is set in stark contrast to the quality of life we now have in Christ. The old life is to be shed like old, filthy clothes (v. 22) and the new life in Christ is to be put on like bright, new clothes (v. 24). The spiritual dynamic enabling this transition from the old to the new is the constant renewal of our inner life (v. 23).

Only in the context of this spiritual experience can we begin seriously adopting specific guidelines for day to day living. Without such a context, the guidelines in our passage become legalistic rules generating a version of external religion that has more in common with the Pharisees who killed Jesus than it does with the way of Christ. Religious experience then loses its spiritual moorings and settles for shallow

outward show. As I learned from friends while living and working in Germany years ago, this kind of religion is “worn on the coat sleeve” rather than in the heart.

Now let’s see how we need to live as truly spiritual people of God in union with Christ.

Guidelines for the New Way of Living Eph. 4:25-5:5

Scripture Texts:

Greek New Testament

<4:25> Διὸ ἀποθέμενοι τὸ ψευδὸς λαλεῖτε ἀλήθειαν ἕκαστος μετὰ τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη. <4:26> ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἀμαρτάνετε· ὁ ἥλιος μὴ ἐπιδυνέτω ἐπὶ [τῷ] παροργισμῷ ὑμῶν, <4:27> μηδὲ δίδοτε τόπον τῷ διαβόλῳ. <4:28> ὁ κλέπτων μηκέτι κλεπτέτω, μᾶλλον δὲ κοπιᾷ τῷ ἐργαζόμενος ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἵνα ἔχη μεταδιδόναι τῷ χρείαν ἔχοντι. <4:29> πᾶς λόγος σαπρὸς ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν μὴ ἐκπορευέσθω, ἀλλὰ εἴ τις ἀγαθὸς πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν τῆς χρείας, ἵνα δῶ χάριν τοῖς ἀκούουσιν. <4:30> καὶ μὴ λυπεῖτε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἐσφραγίσθητε εἰς ἡμέραν ἀπολυτρώσεως. <4:31> πᾶσα πικρία καὶ θυμὸς καὶ ὀργὴ καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ βλασφημία ἀρθήτω ἀφ’ ὑμῶν σὺν πάσῃ κακίᾳ. <4:32> γίνεσθε [δὲ] εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί, εὐσπλαγχοί, χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν. <5:1> γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητά <5:2> καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας. <5:3> πορνεία δὲ καὶ ἀκαθαρσία πᾶσα ἢ πλεονεξία μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν, καθὼς πρέπει ἀγίοις, <5:4> καὶ αἰσχροτήτης καὶ μωρολογίας ἢ εὐτραπείας, ἃ οὐκ ἀνήκον, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριστίας. <5:5> τοῦτο γὰρ ἴστε γινώσκοντες, ὅτι πᾶς πόρνος ἢ ἀκάθαρτος ἢ πλεονέκτης, ὃ ἐστὶν εἰδωλολάτρης, οὐκ ἔχει κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ.

NRSV

25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. 26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not make room for the devil. 28 Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. 29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. 31 Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, 32 and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. 5.1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, 2 and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 3 But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there be thanksgiving. 5 Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

NLT

25 So put away all falsehood and "tell your neighbor the truth" because we belong to each other. 26 And "don't sin by letting anger gain control over you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil. 28 If you are a thief, stop stealing. Begin using your hands for honest work, and then give generously to others in need. 29 Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. 30 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he is the one who has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. 5.1 Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. 2 Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him. 3 Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. 4 Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes – these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. 5 You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world.

Comments:

The first words of verse 24 are significant. The “so then” (NRSV; διὸ in the Greek) links what follows to what precedes as an implication now being made explicit. In other words, once we shed the ‘old clothes’ of non-Christian practice and put on the ‘new clothes’ of Christ, what implications are present in this action? 4:25-5:5 details several places where this new spiritual existence will impact our daily living. A series of short exhortations, technically known as *sententiae*, characterize these verses.

First, we are to make a practice of “speaking the truth” (v. 25). It’s expressed as an ongoing responsibility that is to characterize our pattern of speaking. Several related items are attached to this admonition: (1) shedding as ‘old, dirty clothes’ all lying; (2) individualized responsibility: “each one with his neighbor;” (3) the reason for the admonition: “we’re all members of one another.” In a unified community of faith, truthfulness and honesty with one another is critical.

Second, we are to “get angry” (vv. 26-27). This seemingly contradictory admonition to other clear passages forbidding anger (cf. Jas. 1:20) targets the kind of ‘righteous indignation’ over sin that typified Jesus’ attitudes and actions. With anger at the insensitivity to physical need by the religious authorities, Jesus healed the man with the deformed hand on the sabbath (Mark. 3:5). With anger at the abuse of the temple the Lord forcibly drove out its corruptors (Mk. 11:15-17; Jhn. 2:13-17). Recognizing the potency of anger, Paul offered some practical advice in keeping our anger within legitimate bounds: (1) don’t sin while angry; (2) don’t hold onto it for extended periods; (3) don’t let it become an opportunity for the devil.

Third, the thief is to renounce his life of stealing and replace it with honest work (v. 28). This will enable him to be able to help others, rather than undermine others with theft. Note: the building up of the community is to replace actions that tear down.

Fourth, our speech must be Christianized (v. 29). Literally, ‘every rotten word’ must not be allowed to flow out of our mouths. In other words, the Christian’s mouth is not to be a sewer spewing out verbal garbage. This covers a wide range of things we say, all the way from filthy language to gossip and deceptive speech. When our mouth is Christianized, it focuses on uttering words that have a positive, edifying nature in order to give encouragement to others.

Fifth, our actions and speech must not grieve the Holy Spirit (v. 30). The One who is our source of spiritual strength and leadership must be respected. Improper conduct on our part saddens Him deeply, and limits how He can help us. His presence in our lives is the divine guarantee (the seal) of our redemption at the close of the age.

Sixth, our attitudes must be Christianized (vv. 31-32). Returning to the ‘taking off/putting on’ imagery of 4:17-24, a series of negative attitudes and resulting speech actions -- bitterness, anger, wrath, angry shouting, insults -- are to be removed from our life. These reflect evil and have no place in the Christian’s life. They are to be replaced by a series of positive attitudes with resulting actions: kindness, compassion (literally, big gutted from εὐσπλαγχνοί) leading to acts of forgiveness of others. The standard here: Christ’s forgiveness of us as sinners is the measuring rod defining the level of our forgiveness of others.

Seventh, we must behave ourselves like God (5:1-2). Two emphases emerge here: (1) since we are His beloved children, we must model our behavior after our Heavenly Father (imitators of Him); and (2) we must live out our lives in love (walk in love). Again, Christ is the measuring rod that defines our love (just as...). He concretely demonstrated his love (loved from ἠγάπησεν) for us by sacrificing himself in our behalf in his death on Calvary. Thus our love has real steel in it; not a sloppy emotional ‘good feeling’ about others.

Eighth, our old non-Christian life must be once for all put to death (5:3-5). In somewhat repetitive fashion, verses 3-4 reflect two lists of vices -- sexual immorality, impurity, greed (v. 3); obscene stories (αἰσχροτόης), foolish talk (μωρολογία), vulgar jokes (εὐτραπελία) (v. 4) -- that have no place in the living of Christians. Standards of propriety are important. These sins, Paul declares, should not even be rumored to be present among Christians. Verse five provides the justification for this admonition: people who live in such a moral cesspool have no participation in the Kingdom of God. This, Paul declared to the Ephesians, they fully understood.

Thus, with a series of blunt admonitions Paul defined clearly the impact of the new spiritual existence for the believer in Jesus Christ. But he isn’t finished. 5:6-21 continues this theme, but with some different twists.

Walking as Children of Light 5:6-21

Scripture Texts:

<5:6> Μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς ἀπατάτω κενοῖς λόγοις· διὰ ταῦτα γὰρ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας. <5:7> μὴ οὖν γίνεσθε συμμέτοχοι αὐτῶν· <5:8> ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ· ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε <5:9> - ὁ γὰρ καρπὸς τοῦ φωτὸς ἐν πάσῃ ἀγαθωσύνῃ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ - <5:10> δοκιμάζοντες τί ἐστὶν εὐάρεστον τῷ κυρίῳ, <5:11> καὶ μὴ συγκοινωνεῖτε τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ἀκάρποις τοῦ σκότους, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐλέγχετε. <5:12> τὰ γὰρ κρυφῆ γινόμενα ὑπ' αὐτῶν αἰσχρὸν ἐστὶν καὶ λέγειν, <5:13> τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐλεγχόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ φωτὸς φανεροῦνται, <5:14> πᾶν γὰρ τὸ φανερούμενον φῶς ἐστίν. διὸ λέγει, "Ἐγειρε, ὁ καθεύδων, καὶ ἀνάστα ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἐπιφάσει σοὶ ὁ Χριστός.

<5:15> Βλέπετε οὖν ἀκριβῶς πῶς περιπατεῖτε μὴ ὡς ἄσοφοι ἀλλ' ὡς σοφοί, <5:16> ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν, ὅτι αἱ ἡμέραι πονηραὶ εἰσιν. <5:17> διὰ τοῦτο μὴ γίνεσθε ἄφρονες, ἀλλὰ συνίετε τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου. <5:18> καὶ μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶν ἄσωτία, ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι, <5:19> λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς [ἐν] ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς, ᾄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ, <5:20> εὐχαριστοῦντες πάντοτε ὑπὲρ πάντων ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί, <5:21> ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ.

NRSV

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be associated with them. 8 For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light — 9 for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. 10 Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; 13 but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

15 Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, 16 making the most of the time, because the days are evil. 17 So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, 20 giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

NLT

6 Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the terrible anger of God comes upon all those who disobey him. 7 Don't participate in the things these people do. 8 For though your hearts were once full of darkness, now you are full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! 9 For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. 10 Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, rebuke and expose them. 12 It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. 13 But when the light shines on them, it becomes clear how evil these things are. 14 And where your light shines, it will expose their evil deeds. This is why it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

15 So be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. 16 Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. 17 Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do. 18 Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you. 19 Then you will sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, making music to the Lord in your hearts. 20 And you will always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 21 And further, you will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Comments:

This next segment continues a similar emphasis to the preceding but changes the way the ideas are presented. No longer do we encounter short pithy *sententiae* type exhortations. Instead, we encounter limited admonitions with lengthy rationale in their defense. The central motif here plays off the reference to Christians being children of light rather than of darkness. Light here emphasizes enlightenment about God's will over against darkness symbolizing ignorance of His will.

In the first section, vv. 6-14, a foundational admonition is set forth in verse six: don't let anyone deceive you. What implication does this have ('therefore', v. 7): (1) don't become participants with them (vv. 7-10) and (2) don't become fellow workers with them (vv. 11-14). The second section, vv. 15-21, begins with a foundational admonition to behave ourselves wisely (vv. 15-16), and then illustrates what this means with two sets of negative/positive admonitions (vv. 18-21): don't become fools, but understand (v. 17); don't become drunkards but be filled up (vv. 18-21).

Our new spiritual position in Christ means that we are to live in spiritual enlightenment. This has several ramifications.

First, *Christians are to be very perceptive people who can quickly spot distortions of reality, especially of spiritual truth (vv. 6-14)*. The foundational admonition in verse six, "Let no one deceive you with empty words" (NRSV), is more clearly expressed by the New Living Translation rendering, "Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins..." The basis for the admonition: God's wrath falls on these kind of people. Implication (v. 7): You Christians must not become participants with such people in their sinful actions. Why (vv.8-10): (1) although you once lived in spiritual darkness you're now living in light (v. 8a); (2) walk in accordance with that light (vv. 9-10) and instead of participating in the unfruitful deeds of darkness expose these so that others may see what they truly are (v. 11).

Verse nine adds a parenthetical amplification on the fruit of light: "for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true" (NRSV). Verse ten actually qualifies verse eight so that the statement should read: "As children of light, walk (=behave yourselves) as you test out and determine what is pleasing to the Lord."

Verses 12-14 provide another rationale ('for' in v. 12) to the couplet admonitions in verse 11 "don't share in but expose." Why should we do this? Because of two basic things: (1) the things pagans do in secret are shameful even to talk about, but when these things are exposed "it becomes clear how evil these things are" (NLT, v. 13b); and (2) "where your light shines, it will expose their evil deeds" (NLT, v. 14a). This is reinforced through a series of catchword statements from Isaiah 26:19 and 60:1 in verse 14b: "Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light" (NLT). Although the connection of this to the preceding statement isn't clear, it seems to be a scripturally grounded admonition to Christians to 'wake up' to the urgency of not only living in spiritual enlightenment but of actively reaching out to others to help them do the same thing. As such it becomes a fitting climax to this passage, vv. 6-14, to live with deep spiritual perception.

Second, *Christians are to be very careful how they behave themselves (vv. 15-21)*. This basic admonition is quickly defined (v. 15b) both negatively (don't walk as fools) and positively (walk as wise folks who make the most of every opportunity). The dominating motif of light/darkness (φῶς/σκότος) is replaced now by a parallel set of images: wise ones/fools (σοφοί/ἄσοφοι). To be spiritually illumined is to be spiritually wise; to live in spiritual darkness is to be a fool -- this is the presupposition connecting the two passages.

What does walking as spiritually wise people entail? Two sets of positive/negative admonitions elaborate on this in verses 17-21.

We must not act foolishly (v. 17). Rather, we should learn what God's will is. Authentic Christian behavior must grow out of clear understanding of how God wants us to live. Ignorance of God's will leads to perverted, corrupted conduct.

In similar fashion the next pair of admonitions (vv. 18-21) elaborate on the same theme in greater detail. Drunkenness -- not drinking -- causes ignorance and leads to the perversion of God's will. The Greek expression, μὴ μεθύσκεσθε, defines a pattern of excessive drinking of wine. In such a condition the ability to clearly perceive God's will, especially in behavior, is completely lost. We are then admonished to be full, but of the Holy Spirit rather than of wine. Again this fullness is defined as an ongoing condition that charac-

terizes our lives.

How does the full presence of the Holy Spirit impact our lives? In a series of five Greek modal participles (vv. 18b-21) Paul defines what constitutes the fullness of the divine Spirit in the Christian's life: (1) speaking to one another through musical expressions (first three participles in vv. 18b-19); (2) giving thanks to God (v. 20); (3) being respectfully submissive to fellow believers (v. 21). Notice the traditional Jewish and early Christian linking of the vertical relationship (individual to God) to the horizontal relationships (individual to others). When the Spirit of God is fully active in our lives, we will reach out both to God and people around us in spiritually healthy and productive ways. Neglect one of these aspects and our spiritual life plummets downward into corruption and perversion of the Gospel of Christ.

A note on verses 21. This verse is the Bible translator's nightmare, especially when translating the biblical text into English. For that reason, one encounters a wide array of efforts both to translate the Greek participle phrase, "showing respectful consideration of one another in reverence to Christ." Sometimes it is linked with verses 17-20, but increasingly recent translations link it with the husband/wife section in verses 22-33. In reality, it belongs to both sections. This kind of thing one could easily do when writing in ancient Koine Greek, but is utterly impossible to do in modern English.

The significance of this is profound. Connected to verses 18-20, it becomes the inclusio defining border to the series of modal participles characterizing what it means for the Christian to be filled with the Spirit. Its horizontal emphasis (showing respectful consideration of one another...) returns to the horizontal emphasis of the first participle (speaking to yourselves...). In between comes the vertical emphasis on reaching out to God. The use of such 'boundary markers' (known technically as *inclusiæ*) is quite common in ancient Greek. Thus its connection with verses 18-20 is undeniable.

Yet, the verbal action of 'showing respectful consideration' (ὑποτασσόμενοι) becomes the defining admonition in the following section on husbands and wives. What Paul clearly does in this is to take the model of the Christian community -- as the family of God -- in how they relate to one another and then apply it to the family especially at the point of how wives and husbands should relate to one another.

Even later copyists of the Greek text of the New Testament understood this and typically repeat a verb form of the participle in verse 22 in order to make it clear. These range from "Wives, show respectful consideration..." in codex D G K and many others, to "Let wives show respectful consideration..." in codex Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus and several others. However, two very important early copies of the NT, codex \mathfrak{P}^{46} and Vaticanus along with several others, do not insert the repeated verb form and most likely reflect how the text was originally written.

Summation:

What can be learned from Ephesians 4:25-5:21? Several things come to mind. **First**, Christian behavior grows out of and is founded on our spiritual relationship to God through Christ Jesus. When we first came into relationship with God in conversion we entered into a marvelous spiritual experience that Paul characterized as living 'in Heavenly places' (2:1-10). **Second**, Christian behavior is the consequence of the ongoing process of shedding the old, filthy clothes of the pre-Christian life and of getting dressed up with Christ as our spiritual garment (4:17-24). The continual inner renewal through the Holy Spirit is the dynamic driving both this 'getting re-dressed' and the subsequent patterns of behavior (4:23). **Third**, Christian behavior takes place in the context of the community of faith and is designed to contribute to the spiritual health of the entire community (4:1-15). **Fourth**, specific patterns of behavior as outlined in 4:25-5:5 put the Christian in a dramatically different lifestyle than his non-Christian friend. For there to not be this difference is strong indication of the lack of the redeeming presence of Christ. **Fifth**, our behavior is the by-product of living in spiritual enlightenment which implies spiritual wisdom (5:6-21). This also obligates us to seek to enlighten others as well. This enlightenment helps us better understand how we're to both reach out to God and also to people around us.