

Bible Basics Conference 2009: "Walk Worthy of the Calling!"

Part 11

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Place	Catford
Duration	00:30:40
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/cbb003/bible-basics-conference-2009-walk-worthy-of-the-calling

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[00:00:00] Good afternoon. Shall we read together the verses that are before us first of all? Ephesians chapter 5, verse 1.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, [00:01:02] that no hoolmonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Be not ye therefore partakers with them, for ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even [00:02:02] to speak of those things which are done in secret, but all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light. For whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the times, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. [00:03:04] Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. As we have read down those first 21 verses of chapter 5, there's obviously a lot of detail in those verses. But I think especially with a conference like this over two days, we've seen that 30 minutes hasn't been enough for each of the speakers to really get into perhaps all the detail that is in each of these sections. And so, I would like to bring before you, right at the start, the few words that are really on my mind.

And it's that verse that we read towards the end there, that well-known refrain, which I think in a large measure sums up how this chapter is encouraging us to be as Christians in this [00:04:08] world. It's those phrases, but be filled with the Spirit. I'm sure we've heard them before, be filled with the Spirit. And as we go through these verses together, then I would like us to remember and have clearly

before us that injunction, that exhortation, be filled with the Spirit.

Because I'm sure it will help us in our daily lives. In fact, there's two challenges that I would like to bring before you. We've seen, particularly yesterday, that this book of Ephesians, like a number of New Testament books, has these twin focus on. That there's the doctrine that we're told of first, and there's the practice. Doctrine and practice. And that as Christians [00:05:08] living in this century for the Lord Jesus, we need to understand the doctrine, how important that is, and we need to be helped by being filled with the Spirit to live practical lives here for the Lord Jesus. Both are important. And so the two challenges, again, I'd like you to try and focus on the doctrinal part. At the end of this weekend, can you go away and remember, and can you in your mind give a summary of those six chapters? Can you go through chapter one, perhaps picking a few phrases, key phrases from chapter one, and so on, all the way through chapter six? I'm sure there's many here who can do that already. Perhaps you'd like to go through the detail. Can you go through [00:06:01] the argument throughout the whole book? A challenge for you, so that you fully understand what the Word of God is saying. But surely the practical challenge is to be filled with the Spirit. Now, we get many challenges and targets today. Many. One of my challenges in my daily work is to get a particular young man a grade C in his GCSE. This young man has already caused me a few headaches. The way he faces the challenge was, I remember on Thursday lunchtime, he hadn't done his work. Went and found him. Went and got him. Bringing him back yet again to do his work at lunch. When I went through the door and he saw me, his face dropped. But faced with that challenge, that awful thing of having to do some work, [00:07:02] he picked up his bag and he threw it at the door. He stormed out of the door. He went out into the playground. He went to the canoe shed in the school ground and he banged his head on the canoe shed. He put his fist into there and five minutes later, thankfully, he'd calmed down. Faced with a challenge. I hope you're not going to be like that when faced with a challenge. Because being filled with the Spirit is a real challenge for all of us. A real challenge. How can we live a life which is pleasing to the Lord Jesus? How can we live that life?

Many of us here have spent a large proportion of our lives listening to people speak. Many of us have read the Scriptures regularly. We've listened to tapes. We've read books. [00:08:03] We've had those that have gone before us. Those that we've known. Good practical Christians. Good examples for us that we can follow and that we can watch. We heard yesterday that one of the things that Ephesians tells us is that we should put on that new man. And in this chapter we have be filled with the Spirit. Increasingly, the world won't won't listen when we try to speak of the Lord Jesus. Again, just this week, I heard on the radio a news item and it was really about some clothing that was duplicated in some way and they were going to give it to teenagers that were down and out in Edinburgh. Just a news item. And they had on this lady and she just got going telling them what they were going to do and she spoke about [00:09:04] people being made in the image of God. And the interviewer just cut her off. Didn't want anything to do with that. And that's what's like today, isn't it? It's difficult to speak to people about the Lord Jesus. So we need in this day and age, we need people who are practical Christians, who are filled with the Spirit, whose lives mirror the life of the Lord Jesus. Whose lives speak to people in how they act, in what they do, in what they say that reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus. And our scriptures here help us. It says, walk in love, live a life of love. That's certainly difficult for us to do. But we have an example, our Lord Jesus Christ. He loved us and gave himself up for us.

[00:10:06] What an example for us to follow. We're here in this world to live for the Lord Jesus and to love our fellow man. To live for them, not ourselves. The Lord Jesus, we're told, gave his life as that fragrant offering. How God the Father would love to see lives in this world today that are a fragrant

offering to him, that are a sacrifice to God. We're told, aren't we, that as we read through verses three and four, we're given these practical instructions. We might ask ourselves a question, why does the New Testament give us many practical instructions? I'm very thankful that they do. But we couldn't keep the law, that's why the Lord Jesus had to come. Why do we therefore get [00:11:05] these practical instructions? We can use these practical instructions as we read them. We know that as we read the Word of God, and we encouraged to read daily yesterday, that as we read the Word of God, it cleanses us. It brings us up short. It can be a test for us. We can be reading down here in these verses, and it can arrest us and stop us and prevent us doing more damage or doing wrong things. The Christian life, as we see here, is a practical life. And in verses three and four, we get a list of things that we're told not to do. But then at the end of verse four, it says, but giving of thanks. There is instructions we're told not to do, but then we're told what to do.

We have in verse nine, where it says the fruit of the Spirit, which I believe the commentaries [00:12:06] tell us that that really should ring the fruit of the light. We're told that it consists in all goodness, doing good, righteous things, righteousness, and in truth. We need to find out practically what pleases the Lord. We're told, aren't we, in these verses, that the Kingdom of Christ is characterized by holiness, and how we need holiness, how the world needs to see practical holiness in the lives of those who claim to be Christians. Because we've probably met people who say, yes, I go to church on Sunday. Yes, I believe. But we start speaking to them. We perhaps might start trying to engage in spiritual conversations with them. And we've [00:13:04] got doubts. We're concerned. We're worried about some of the things they say or don't say. And here we say that a true believer might commit these sins, but no believer is characterized by them.

No believer is characterized by these characteristics that we have in these first few verses in our chapter. If people profess to be Christians, but are characterized by these sins, we can have no part with them. We're not only to avoid their sins, but also them. Verse 7 tells us, be not ye therefore partakers with them. We have to avoid people who are characterized by these wicked, wrong things. So we are to walk as children of light.

[00:14:07] Practically, somebody suggested a summary where the believer's life is the bringing forth the fruits of light because he is a child of light while maintaining complete separation from the unfruitful works of darkness. Verse 10 tells us to prove what is acceptable unto the Lord. Verse 11, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. The light manifests all things that come under its rays. It makes them clear. We can see them. God in his character is light. God is light. But we as believers are only light in the Lord.

[00:15:05] So I'm sure we've heard the idea of the moon reflecting the light of the sun. That we must abide in the light of Christ himself in order to shed light. If we are outside the Lord's will, if we are not in communion with the Lord, then we're not reflecting, we won't reflect that light that God is himself. So we have this contrast. We were once darkness, terrible situation that we were in. But that contrast, now you are light in the Lord. We're only light in the Lord. We're told to have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, nothing to do with them. But we are told positively to expose them.

[00:16:08] And that everything exposed by the light becomes visible. We're told to live carefully and wisely.

Now there's another challenge for us here. In our lives, where this verse tells us to make the most of

every opportunity, let us think about our own individual circumstances. We're hopefully in an assembly with those that we love, those who rejoice in the truth of the Lord Jesus. That we have relationships with them. We all have our families, maybe close to us, maybe scattered far and wide. Many have responsibilities in work. [00:17:01] And we have the community, the area, the people that we do live amongst. Now, as we live our lives, as we are being filled with the Spirit and being led by the Spirit, then those, and I'm sure there are other areas, but we need to think of our situation, our relationships, our actions, and how we live with regards at least to these four areas. That we might be the only person who's a Christian that we meet five days a week or even more these days at work. That we might be the only person that those people see. We clearly have responsibilities to our family and to the assembly, but we have responsibilities amongst those whom we live, those that we rub shoulders with during the day, to live practical Christian lives. And as we said, [00:18:07] it might be difficult to speak to these people. We need almost, I think, to be waiting, hoping for an opportunity. Often people live busy lives, and at work especially, it's not appropriate at times. But we need to be looking for those opportunities. We need to be praying and asking the Lord to give us those opportunities. So we might speak to people. So we might be aware often when people go through difficult times, times when they might be more receptive to hearing what the Lord Jesus has done for them. We need to have this before us. So the scriptures say, don't live unwisely, but positively. To live wisely. We need to be wise. We need to have the wisdom of God. We need to know how to react and act in every situation we find ourselves. [00:19:07] Don't be foolish. We need to understand what the Lord's will is. The Lord's will for us as individuals might and probably is different for each one of us. The Lord has a plan for us. And he has a plan for what we do and how we act and what we say and how we live. He has a plan for us. And we need to understand what the Lord's will is for us. So we come to this injunction where it says, be filled with the Spirit. Now there are men and women that we're told about in the scriptures who were filled with the Spirit. We can go right back into the Old Testament and have a look at Bezalel. He, we're told, was wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and all manner of [00:20:07] workmanship. Doctrinally secure, but practically in the objects that he made for the tabernacle, he was skilled. Both combined. We're told that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. We read of the early disciples, we know Acts chapter 2, that it says that all were filled with the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. We further read of Peter who, when he speaks to the rulers and the elders of Israel, was filled with the Holy Spirit. Later on in the chapter, the early disciples, it says of them that they were all filled. There are others, aren't there? Paul and Stephen, and others that we're told of that were filled with the Spirit. [00:21:08] So from that brief resume, we see and we know, don't we, that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit. It can be repeated many times. In that chapter 4, Peter was filled at the beginning of the chapter, and then later on it speaks of him being filled again. But it's something that we obviously should desire. That it's being filled with the Spirit didn't just happen to Christians in New Testament days, but it's happened throughout church history. And we can be filled with the Spirit today. The tense of the verb, I believe, it says be filled. It's a present continuous tense. It's saying now be filled with the Spirit and go on being filled with the Spirit. [00:22:02] It's something that we're encouraged to be filled with the Spirit. We should be filled with the Spirit continually. Have you ever been filled with the Spirit?

Do you know of people who've been filled with the Spirit? I think that's quite, again, a challenging question. But being filled with the Spirit is something that we can control. That we have some say in. So how can we be filled with the Spirit? Something that we can control. We know the Holy Spirit is a person of the Godhead.

We're talking about a holy person of the Godhead. God himself. And we told, we read yesterday, that we're not to grieve the Spirit. How can we grieve the Spirit?

[00:23:07] Well, grieving the Spirit is something that we do when we're doing things that are wrong. If we are acting wrongly, we're clearly grieving the Spirit. The Spirit cannot work. The Holy Spirit is a person. I'm sure many of us really don't like upsetting the people that we live close to, our partners, our children. We don't like upsetting people. Here we're told, aren't we, not to grieve the Spirit. We cannot be filled with the Spirit if we're grieving the Spirit. And the Spirit is a person. And if we can perhaps say reverently, he is gentle and sensitive. He gets upset when we're doing things wrong, saying things wrong, being in the wrong places. We obviously know that we must resist the devil. And we're also told, in Thessalonians, not to quench the Spirit.

[00:24:11] The Spirit, living inside all of us who've trusted the Saviour, we're sealed with the Spirit. The Spirit will be prompting us, encouraging us to do this or do that. But if we quench the Spirit, then we obviously are preventing the Spirit working. The Spirit can't fill us if we're saying, no, I don't want to do that, if we're deliberately, or sometimes we do it unconsciously, if we're doing that and quenching the Spirit. We're told, aren't we, that we're the temple of the Holy Ghost. We need to remember that in our daily lives, in what we do, who we associate with. [00:25:01] And as we obey the Holy Spirit, as we follow him, increasingly he will show his desires to us.

He will make more known of the Lord Jesus, and we'll appreciate more of him. And the Holy Spirit will lead us into what he wants us to do. But, what struck me, there are no shortcuts. It doesn't come ready-made.

We're so used in modern society for things being done quickly, for a quick fix, for something to happen immediately. And being filled with the Spirit is something that we need to work at, we need to ask for help with, and we need certainly help from above. But we're filled with the Spirit. As I was coming along Bromley Road, stuck in a little bit of traffic, [00:26:04] made me think again of the sat-navs we now have got in our cars. I don't particularly like sat-navs, but have got to admit they're useful at times. I like to plot a route, I like to know where I'm going, I like to know where the detour I can make if you run into problems. But with a sat-nav, maybe that aerial on the roof, and the instructions come down step by step. It might say, in a mile, turn left at the roundabout. It might say, ten yards, turn right. And it strikes me, I think that's a little bit like a Spirit-filled life. Thankfully as Christians we know where we're heading, we know our destiny, we know we're going to spend eternity with the Lord Jesus. But step by step, we need to be waiting upon the Holy Spirit, we need to be turning to him for guidance. And do you agree with me how difficult [00:27:04] that is? How difficult it is to wait on the Lord. How we need that filling of the Spirit. If we think of the life of the Lord Jesus, that he went to Sycos well to see that woman, just at the right time. If he'd gone, I'm speaking reverently, a few moments earlier, or at the wrong time, it would have been a good thing to go and see that woman and speak to her. But it had to be at the right time. We think of when the Lord Jesus heard that Lazarus was dead and we told that he waited two days. There's a perfect time that even when we feel to do the right things, it's a step further than that. We have to wait on the Spirit so that we do the right things at the right time and be led by him. How crucial that is today, that we follow the promptings, the [00:28:04] leadings of the Holy Spirit, so that he can use us, so that somebody in our family can be saved, so that we can be a witness to him at work, so that we can encourage those in the assemblies round about us, doing the right thing at the right time, saying the right thing at the right time, being led and prompted by the Spirit. And we're told that being filled in the Spirit, I believe the participle continues and tells us about speaking, being filled with the Spirit, goes on speaking to yourselves with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing, making music in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus. They're showing us what a Spirit-filled person is like. We have in Galatians, don't we, the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy,

peace, etc., when we're filled with the Spirit. [00:29:06] And we're toldings to submit, submit to one another out of reverence to Christ, not to be thoughtless, impetuous, selfish. We're all members of one body, part of a whole, and it is the whole body that matters. I think it's just worth saying that here we're not told to submit to everybody and everything. If the Pope came along and told us to do this and do that and worship the Virgin Mary, we're not told to submit to what he says. But clearly these verses are written to the Ephesians, are written to those who have imbibed the doctrine, followed and agreed the doctrine. It's those who we're walking with and those that love the Lord Jesus Christ. We're asked to submit to and take that lowly place as the Lord Jesus did. So, challenges. Learn the epistle to the [00:30:07] Ephesians. Be filled with the Spirit and look at those four areas and challenge ourselves.

Are we being filled with the Spirit in those aspects of our life? Are we ready to be used because we haven't grieved the Spirit? We haven't quenched the Spirit? The Spirit is able to work through us because we're in a right state and situation to serve the Lord Jesus.