

Walking In The Kingdom - Ethics In The Early Church

LOVE FULFILLS THE LAW AND REPLACES LEGALISM

Romans 13:8-10 Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves another has fulfilled the Law. (9) For: "Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not lust;" and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (10) Love works no ill to its neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law.

1 John 3:22-24 And whatever we ask, we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. (23) And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment. (24) And he who keeps His commandment dwells in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He gave to us.

2 John 1:5-6 And now I beseech you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. (6) And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, as you heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

Comparison of Law vs. Love

LAW

- ▶ External
- ▶ Perfect Performance
- ▶ Blessings are based on performance
- ▶ Curses for breaking taboos
- ▶ Righteousness via Law
- ▶ Specific Precepts
- ▶ Everyone treated the same
- ▶ Only responsible for own spiritual performance
- ▶

LOVE

- ▶ Internal and External
- ▶ Growth As a Person
- ▶ We already have all the blessings "in Christ"
- ▶ Taboos eliminated at the Cross
- ▶ Righteousness by Faith
- ▶ General Principles
- ▶ Everyone treated differently
- ▶ We are responsible to help others grow in Christ

LONG-TERM LIFESTYLE - REPLACES - SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (WALKING VS. ACTING)

In the New Testament the overwhelming emphasis is on the long-term general tone of the Christian's life and conduct e.g. are they walking in the Spirit or in the flesh. The word for "walk" is peripateo / peripatein and means to walk about as the wandering Greek philosophers or Jesus or Paul would do. It is a continual, present-tense, state of being; a habitual daily chosen lifestyle consistent with a personal philosophy. So Christians then act out from Christ, out from deep inner Christian conviction, and not "up to" a legalistic and particular set of

laws, precepts or regulations. It is no longer about a set of one-off actions, a sort of spiritual “to-do list” that must be accomplished. Rather it is about continually abiding and living in love and holiness and seeing how that plays out in a wide variety of personal and cultural circumstances.

From the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia:

walk wôk (*περιπατεῖν*, *peripateín*): Aside from its frequent occurrence in the usual sense, the word “walk” is used **figuratively** of conduct and of spiritual states.

- (1) Observance of laws or customs: “Thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs” (Acts 21:21).
- (2) Of the spiritual life: “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light” (1John 1:7); “That like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4); “Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16); “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2Corinthians 5:7).

WALKING IN THE LIGHT:

John 8:12, 12:35, 2 Corinthians 4:2, Ephesians 5:18, 1 John 1:6,7

WALKING IN THE TRUTH:

2 John 1:4, 3 John 1:3,4

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT:

Romans 8:1,4 ; Galatians 5:16,25

WALKING IN NEWNESS OF LIFE:

Romans 6:4, Galatians 6:14-16

WALKING IN LOVE:

Romans 14:15 Ephesians 5:2

WALKING WORTHY:

Ephesians 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 1 John 2:6, Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 1:10

WALKING ORDERLY AND IN WISDOM:

Ephesians 5:15, Romans 13:13-14, Philippians 3:16-18, 1 Thessalonians 4:1, 12, Colossians 4:5

THE SPIRIT – REPLACES - THE LETTER

Romans 7:6 MKJV But now we having been set free from the Law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

2 Corinthians 3:6-9 MKJV (6) who also has made us able ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit makes alive. (7) But if the ministry of death, having been engraved in letters in stone was with glory (so that the sons of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses because of the glory of his face), which was being done away; (8) shall not the ministry of the Spirit be with more glory?

(9) For if the ministry of condemnation is glorious, much more does the ministry of righteousness exceed in glory.

Romans 2:28-29 MKJV For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that outwardly in flesh; (29) but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart; in spirit and not in letter; whose praise is not from men, but from God.

Galatians 3:2-5 MKJV This only I would learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing of faith? (3) Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, do you now perfect yourself in the flesh? (4) Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it is even in vain? (5) Then He supplying the Spirit to you and working powerful works in you, is it by works of the law, or by hearing of faith?

Galatians 5:18 MKJV But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Scenario Question: A religious leader knows the Bible backwards but is full of hate, rage and control. He trusts no one and invents numerous rules for his church. What is wrong with this?

PRINCIPLES BECOME MORE IMPORTANT THAN PRECEPTS

Matthew 12:1-8 MKJV At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath day. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck the heads of grain and to eat. (2) But when the Pharisees saw, they said to Him, Behold, your disciples do that which it is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day. (3) (6) But I say to you that One greater than the temple is in this place. (7) But if you had known what this is, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned those who are not guilty. (8) For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

(Temple = source of the Law, regulations; Sacrifice = traditional worship, altars, offerings etc;
Mercy = applied faith and kindness)

James 2:12-13 MKJV So speak and do as those who shall be judged by the Law of liberty. (13) For he who has shown no mercy shall have judgment without mercy, and mercy exults over judgment.

WE “DRAW THE LINES” BY APPLYING SPIRIT-LED PRINCIPLES TO SPECIFIC SITUATIONS AND CULTURES

1. A particular principle is a rule which may be applied differently in different contexts.
2. You do not have to list every single use-case when applying a principle. If there is a clear teaching / definition/ boundary line, then everything else on the “wrong” side of that line is also wrong e.g. Jesus teaching on marriage automatically (as an applied principle) excludes polygamy, cohabitation, same-sex marriage, adultery, casual divorce and a host of other behaviors.
3. Fairness is treating everyone differently. (Luke 12:48, James 3:1) God’s grace leaves room for growth!
4. The result of applying a principle to a situation should be in accordance with Christ and bring about love, redemption, reconciliation, peace, holiness and general spiritual maturity. Harshness is seldom justified.
5. We are not to create a legalistic spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7, Romans 8:14-16, 1 John 4:18))

6. The creation of a sanctified internal spiritual state is always much more important than respectable outward religious conformity. (Matthew 9:10-13)
7. The Holy Spirit may occasionally move in ways that are seldom repeated (e.g. Ananias & Sapphira)
8. The Holy Spirit may give unique instructions for particular contexts (e.g. "go up to that chariot..")
9. A spiritual instruction in one context (e.g. take no bag or cloak in Matthew 10:9,10) may be revoked in another context (e.g. take, bag cloak and sword Luke 22:35,36) or even apply differently to different people such as the apostles Peter and Paul (1 Corinthians 9:3-10, 14-18)
10. In the N.T. the O.T. laws serve as a guide to spiritual principles. So the Sabbath is no longer a legal requirement with a penalty/ reward attached, however it is still a wise spiritual practice.

7 Examples of Applied Principles

1. Treatment of the rich and the poor in a congregation (James 2:1-9)
2. Issues of food, drink and Sabbaths (Romans 14:1-10)
3. Eating food sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 10:14-21)
4. Long hair and veils in Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:1-16)
5. Selfish behavior at Communion (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)
6. The brother in need (1 John 3:16-18, James 2:15,16)
7. Partnership with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

Scenario Question: What spiritual principles clearly indicate that sex before marriage is wrong?