

Walking as Children of Light Ephesians 5:3-14

Ephesians 5:3-14 (ESV) But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. [4] Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. [5] For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. [6] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. [7] Therefore do not associate with them; [8] for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light [9] (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), [10] and try to discern 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 speak of the things that they do in secret. [13] But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, [14] for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Introduction

- A. In our study of Ephesians Paul and I have looked at small units of thought (about 20) to help us explain what God is saying. However, it is important to keep the entire letter in view.
- B. The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians is can be divided into two sections.
 - 1. Chapters 1-3 are doctrine. Theologians use a word to describe the truth God is revealing in Ephesians 1-3. The word is indicative.

Indicative (def) - Pointing out; bringing to notice; giving intimation or knowledge of something not visible or obvious. *Webster's Dictionary (1913)*

- 2. Chapters 4-6 are practice or application (doctrine remains). Theologians use a word to describe the truth God is revealing in Ephesians 4-6. The word is imperative.

Imperative (def) - Expressive of command; commanding; authoritative; not to be avoided or evaded; obligatory; binding; compulsory. *Webster's Dictionary (1913)*

- 3. Chapters 4-6 give us binding and compulsory commands. It is not simply a list of rules. It is vital that we remain rooted in chapters 1-3. Because, as we think, we are.

What is the theme which has run right through chapter 4 and spilled over into chapter 5? These chapters are a stirring summons to the unity and purity of the church; but they are more than that. Their theme is the integration of Christian experience (what we are), Christian theology (what we believe) and Christian ethics (how we behave). They emphasize that being, thought and action belong together and must never be separated. For what we are governs how we think, and how we think determines how we act. John Stott in *TBST Ephesians Commentary*, p 193

- C. The title of this sermon is **Walking as Children of Light**. To walk as children of light is to walk (live) a certain way. This text describes three essential characteristics.
 - 1. Children of light avoid sexual immorality.
 - 2. Children of light watch their companions.
 - 3. Children of light discern what pleases God.

I. Children of light avoid sexual immorality. Why? Three reasons:

- A. One, sexual immorality always involves the heart in the sin of coveting. To covet is to desire the possession of something that is not yours.
 - 1. Desire (to covet) can have a good use. Covet the greater gifts. Or, to covet to serve as an overseer is a good thing. These things do not belong to anyone.

Ex: If the thing desired does belong to someone (serve like Beth Mellinger or prophesy like Dan Welch or pastor like Paul Michaels) we are wise to push pause.

2. God addressed coveting in the 10 commandments ... twice. Coveting is involved in the first and tenth commandments.

Exodus 20:3 (ESV) "You shall have no other gods before me."

Exodus 20:17 (ESV) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

3. When we covet we announce to God that we are not satisfied with either Him or His provision in our life. Our worship becomes devoted to another. We are idolaters.

Covetousness is idolatry. The New Testament tells us so time and time again. It does not matter what it is, anything that you and I tend to set up as the big thing, the central thing, in our lives, the thing about which we think and dream, the thing that engages our imagination, the thing that we *live* for, the thing that gives us the biggest thrill; if it is *anything* other than GOD, it is idolatry. And it is for every one of us to examine ourselves. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17-5:17*, p 340

- B. Two, sexual immorality is a sin against yourself and your brother or sister in Christ. I'll share a number of Scriptures with you so you may feel the weight of this sin.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 (ESV) Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. [19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (ESV) For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; [4] that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, [5] not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; [6] that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. [7] For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. [8] Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

1. We cannot commit sexual immorality and love our neighbor (their best interest).

Romans 13:9 (ESV) The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

- C. Three, sexual immorality (a lifestyle) reveals that you have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. In Ephesians 5:5 it says we may be sure of this.

Ephesians 5:5 (ESV) For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Matthew 5:27-29 (ESV) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' [28] But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [29] If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell."

1. We have a soul and eternity is real. We will not be persuaded to turn from coveting until we see the beauty of Jesus Christ and the ugliness of our sin.
2. Sex is a good gift from a good God but it belongs in marriage.

Ex: Fire is wonderful in the fire place, not in the whole house.

3. In having no inheritance in God the wrath of God comes (sin condemns us, physical sufferings, confusion, consequences, punishment, etc).
- D. How do we overcome the temptation toward coveting and sexual immorality? If you remember Ephesians 4 you know we put off and we put on (here we put off filthy, crude sexual joking).
1. What shall we put on? Thanksgiving. Show me a person caught in sexual immorality and I'll show you a miserable, coveting, unthankful person. God is not enough.

Thanksgiving is almost a synonym for the Christian life. Peter O'Brien in *Ephesians The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, p 361

2. Paul feels so strongly about the prominence of thanksgiving in the life of the Christian that he will repeat himself later in Ephesians 5. It isn't bad memory.

Ephesians 5:18-20 (ESV) Be filled with the Spirit, [19] addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, [20] giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

3. The person coveting does not sing with joy to the Lord either. The Christian sings because the Christian has something to sing about. The gospel!

II. Children of light carefully watch their companions. Why?

- A. Because our companions exert influence on us. In Ephesians 5:6-7 we read that we are not to associate with sons of disobedience. It is that serious.

1 Corinthians 15:33-34 (ESV) Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." [34] Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame."

1. In the church of Jesus Christ you find wheat (faithful believers) and tares (unbelievers). You, like me, will want to be with folks who help you grow and experience and love God.
2. We are also careful about companions in the world. Yes we should be with them. However, as we spend time with them (like Jesus) they will see a difference.

Ex: Light and dark can't participate together. They don't mix. You turn a light on in a room and darkness flees. Jesus, prostitutes, not a participant (flee temptation).

3. Co-workers want to go to an inappropriate venue. You wisely pass. You pass because you will likely cross the line and become a participant.

Ephesians 5:11a (ESV) Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness.

- B. Beware the folly of playing "how close to edge can I get without getting burned?"

2 Corinthians 6:14 (ESV) Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

- C. It is obvious that to win the world to Christ means we must be different than the world. To be salt and light means we have different values.

1. You take part in unfruitful deeds and you will eventually get burned. It will certainly grieve the

Holy Spirit and you will drift from God. You moved.

III. Children of light avoid sexual immorality, they carefully watch their companions, which means they discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

A. To please the Lord is to bear fruit of light. To bear fruit of light is to be about the business of pursuing whatever is good and right and true.

1. Good is that which is willingly and sacrificially done for others.

1 Thessalonians 5:15 (ESV) See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

- Sexual immorality does not seek to do good. Companions of darkness will not seek to do good either (at least for very long).

2. Right has to do with righteousness. Our relationship with God through Jesus Christ (imputed) and the way we live our lives (holiness).

Romans 6:13 & 16 (ESV) Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness... [16] Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

- Sexual immorality does not seek righteousness. Companions of darkness will not seek righteousness either.

3. True has to do with honesty, reliability, trustworthiness, integrity. To be true is to be faithful. To be true is to the right thing even if no one is looking.

- Sexual immorality is not true. Companions of darkness are not true either.

We see therefore that goodness pertains primarily to our relationship with others, righteousness primarily to our relationship with God, and truth primarily to personal integrity. In those three things and in those three ways the fruit of light consists. John MacArthur in *Ephesians Commentary*, p 210

B. To please the Lord further is to expose deeds of darkness.

1. We watch out for one another. Love speaks up firmly and graciously.

Galatians 6:1-2 (ESV) Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. [2] Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Close

A. I am reasonably confident that the majority of folks here at Living Hope Church are pursuing the fruit of light. You do desire change to come to your life for the glory of God.

1. You know that those God predestined He called, those God called He justified, and those God justified He also glorified. We are being conformed to the image of Christ!

B. Because I do not know everyone's heart or how you use time these verses compel me to inquire about

your life. Are you walking as children of light (not salvation by works but identity)?

1. Are you passionate about avoiding sexual immorality?
2. Are you watching your companions (is someone watching over you)?
3. Are you passionate about pleasing God?

The thing that proves that we are Christians is that, over and above everything else, our ultimate, our final consideration is our desire to seek and know, to discover, the will of the Lord, in order that we may please Him. It is this personal relationship with this blessed person. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17-5:17*, p 409

C. I pray that what thrills you and what you live for is God.

Pray