



Ephesians

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...finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. Ephesians 5:10

This “finding out” what we are to do is connected to the word “walk” of the previous verse. Taken together it says, “Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”

As we walk in the light, we are to find out that which is “acceptable to the Lord.” This is very similar to the statement which Paul uses in Romans 12:2 –

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

The same word is used there and in this verse. It comes from the idea of the testing of metals. When a person wants to “find out” the purity of gold, they will take a sample of it and test it. The process of such testing is to determine if there are impurities, and if so, the gold can be refined in order to further purify it. This is to be true with us as well. By finding out what is acceptable to the Lord, we can then apply it to our walk. In so doing, we are being purified.

This transforming process is compared to the standard measure which we have available to us, the word of God. This is what is to be used for the refining of our walk in this life, and it is what will be opened for our judgment when we stand before the Lord. The words “what is acceptable to the Lord” are to be our goal; they are the standard of our testing.

This does not come to us by an inner voice or some type of external injection of the Holy Spirit. Rather, it comes from reading and applying the word of God to our lives. As we learn and comply, we become more and more acceptable to Him.

Life application: A closer walk with the Lord must come about by adherence to God's word. Without it, we become the arbiters of what is and isn't acceptable. Stay close to the word, know the word, and live out the word. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill you through obedient conformity to God's word.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*.
Ephesians 5:11

In verse 9, the “fruit of the Spirit” was mentioned. This was explained as “all goodness, righteousness, and truth.” Further, it was implied that this is “what is acceptable to the Lord” (verse 10). Now, in contrast to that, we are instructed on “the unfruitful works of darkness.” With such things, we are to “have no fellowship.”

This means that we are not only to not participate in them, but we are not to be adjoined to those who do participate in them while they are so engaged. By being around people who are carousing and conducting their lives in unholiness, we will become infected by that state as well. This is what “fellowship” implies.

Rather than having such fellowship, we are rather to “expose” them. The word from which “expose” is translated gives the idea of confronting, admonishing, convincing, rebuking, and the like. We are to act in such a manner that a complete contrast is set up between our “fruit of the Spirit” and their “unfruitful works of darkness.” In so doing, we will hopefully convict them of their sin and have them turn from such things. If we fellowship with them while they are so engaged, that will never come about. We are to stand apart and demonstrate those attributes which are acceptable to the Lord.

Paul speaks of such things in Romans 6 as well. There he says –

“For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. ²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What is important to understand here is that by being admonished to not fellowship with such unfruitful works, we can – in fact – fellowship with them. We are given the choice as to how we will conduct our walk. It is unfortunate that so many blood-bought believers in Christ

choose to spend their time, not in pursuing what is pleasing to the Lord, but in engaging in exactly what they are asked to refrain from.

In the end, our rewards and losses will be based on how we apply the precepts of the word of God to our lives. What a sad meeting with the Lord it will be for many who have chosen to ignore these warnings, and to continue to fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Life application: In order to bring others to a state of conviction concerning their own sin, we cannot fellowship with them while they are engaged in those sins. In so doing, we are then condoning their wickedness and keeping them from understanding their need for Christ. We have been given a gift in our salvation. Let us be grateful for it, and show that appreciation by walking in accord with that which is pleasing to the Lord.

For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

Ephesians 5:12

This verse is given to highlight the utterly shameful conduct of the “works of darkness” of the previous verse. They are often so perverse and so shameful that they should not even be spoken of. This is a difficult thing in the world today where sexual perversion, satanic rituals, and obscene displays of so-called “art” are made open and public. What was once “done by them in secret” is now highlighted by our elected leaders, proclaimed as acceptable by our judges, and placed at the choicest hours of viewing by the media. Even more, the internet has these things pop up before our eyes by the mere click of a wrong button.

The completely vile nature of the offenses are to be left undescribed by our lips. If this is so, then how much more are we to refrain from them! This is Paul’s intent here. He is indicating that our walk is to be one of light. The works of darkness are often so despicable that we are to not only refrain from participating in them, but just mentioning them is inappropriate.

Life application: While the world devolves into its perversion party, we are to keep our eyes directed towards the Lord, our hearts in meditation upon Him, and our lips fully praising His glory. Let us not have ourselves be caught up in the debauchery which surrounds us, but rather let us have our minds renewed and reinvigorated by God’s word at all times.

But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Ephesians 5:13

The words of this verse are exactly precise and also very nuanced. Thus scholars argue over the accurate intent of them. They are based on the surrounding verses, including the verse to come, and so the meaning can be more readily discerned when taken as a whole –

For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*.¹² For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.¹³ But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.¹⁴ Therefore He says:

“Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light.”

Paul is showing the contrast between light and darkness. We were once darkness; now we are light in the Lord. How did this come about? It was because the light of the Lord first shone on us. Because of that, our deeds were exposed; they were “made manifest by the light.” If we think of the parable of the tares from Mathew 13, we can get an idea of what is being said. The two plants, wheat and tares, grow up together and are almost indistinguishable. However, when the light shines on them, the tares are “made manifest by the light.”

Now think of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ time. They walked among the people and were thought to be good and pious men. However, the light of Jesus’ words about them brought their deeds to light. They were exposed for what they truly were.

In context, Paul is saying the same thing to the believers in Ephesus about the deeds of the pagan world around them, and from which they had been called. The light of the gospel shone on them, disclosing the true nature of who they were in relation to the holy God. This same system of light, truth, and revelation was to be used to discern the state of those who were not yet living in Christ. The vile nature of their lives is exposed by the light which now filled the believers in Ephesus. This is reflected in Philippians 2 –

“Do all things without complaining and disputing,¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...” Philippians 2:14, 15

By shining the light, everything is made manifest by the light. Paul’s words, given under inspiration of the Spirit, show us that the light of the gospel message is the only way to make things which are indecent appear as they really are. Once the truth of the gospel shines on the deeds of wickedness, they are exposed and can be compared to that which is right, holy, and proper.

Life application: Jesus asked us to have our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works. In this, they too can be brought to glorifying our Father in heaven. Without the light of Christ radiating through us and exposing where their error lies, they cannot discern the

true nature of their deeds. There must be something to reveal the error, and something to compare it to. We are to be that light and standard for others to do these things.

Therefore He says:

“Awake, you who sleep,

Arise from the dead,

And Christ will give you light.” Ephesians 5:14

This verse is another which is troubling to scholars. Paul begins with “Therefore He says...” The “Therefore” is setting a contrast to verses 11-13, and is being directly aligned with verses 8-10. We are to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,” while at the same time we are to “walk as children of light.” In order to do these things, he then gives the next words, “He says.”

This implies a citation of Scripture, as it is always used in this manner. However, no such citation exists. The closest we can get is a combination of two verses from Isaiah –

Your dead shall live;

Together with my dead body they shall arise.

Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust;

For your dew *is like* the dew of herbs,

And the earth shall cast out the dead. Isaiah 26:19

Arise, shine;

For your light has come!

And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. Isaiah 60:1

Some scholars see one or another being loosely cited, others see both being combined and loosely cited, and still others find either of those options nonsense. There is actually nothing unprecedented about two citations being combined into one. This happens elsewhere in the New Testament. There is also nothing unusual about a rather loose citation. This also happens elsewhere in the New Testament.

However, what is more probable is that he is referencing the account in Jonah where the captain of the ship comes to wake Jonah from a deadened sleep. There in Jonah 1:6, it says –

“What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps the God will shine on us, so that we may not perish.”

In that verse, the captain uses the word *ashath*. It is a verb which means “to shine.” This word, *ashath*, comes from a primitive root which means “to be sleek” and thus glossy and hence through the idea of polishing to shine. And so the translation should read, “Arise, call on the God; perhaps Paul was thinking of this account when he penned these words.

By shining the light, everything is made manifest by the light. Despite being in a real storm in the sea of chaos, and despite being under physical harm, there was a spiritual connotation that was being drawn out, even by that pagan captain. There was disharmony between them and God which needed to be rectified.

Though they didn't know *of* the gospel, they knew that there was a need *for* the gospel. The light of the gospel message is the only way to make things which are indecent appear as they really are. Once the truth of the gospel shines on the deeds of wickedness, they are exposed and can be compared to that which is right, holy, and proper.

The main key to understanding this is Paul's use of the word "Christ." If he is citing the Old Testament, then the word "Christ" is an obvious interpretation of that citation. He is taking a known set of words and applying a prophetic meaning to them in the work of Christ. And so we are assured that it is Isaiah that is being quoted. But more than that, it is a quote which then asserts the Incarnation. The "glory of the LORD," meaning Yehovah of the Old Testament, is being directly equated with "Christ" of the New. What was concealed in the Old is now revealed in the New.

Understanding this, the citation is saying that walking as children of light (which occurs by arousing from the sleep), and having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (which occurs when we "arise from the dead"), is what will cause Christ to give us light. We are to actively pursue Christ, and actively shun the darkness of the things of this world. As we do, we will be given the light of Christ.

Life application: There is no stagnation in our walk towards our eternal home. We are either moving towards godliness, or we are moving away from it. Each moment is a new moment in which we are to continue to press forward with our eyes on Jesus. In Him is light, and in order to know Him, we must pursue Him through His word. Reader, you are admonished to get your nose into the word and pursue it daily. And then, think on what you have read as you go about your daily walk.