

Walking as Children of Light
Ephesians 5:6-14
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INTRODUCTION

1. Please take your Bible and turn with me to Ephesians chapter 5.
2. We are looking tonight at verses 6-14.
3. Read Ephesians 5:6-14.
4. In our last study together, we looked at the first five verses where we heard Paul telling the Ephesians to *imitate God*.
5. In verse one, we said that the word “therefore” referred us back to verse 32 of chapter 4 and noted that 4:32-5:1 was a unit of thought.
6. Paul was saying they were to imitate God in kindness, in compassion, and in forgiveness.
7. In verse 2, he continued by telling them to imitate Christ.
8. How were they to do that? By walking worthy and by walking in sacrificial love.
9. Before he ends this teaching on imitating God and Christ, he tells them what they are not to imitate.
10. He says they are not to imitate “immorality (v.3a), impurity (v.3b), greed (v.3c), filthiness (v.4a), silly talk (v.4b), and course jesting (v.4c).

11. As an imitator of God and Christ they are to reject all sin.
12. If one is not willing to reject these things, verse 5 says he has no “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”
13. Now as we look at verses 6-14, Paul is continuing to build his thoughts from verse 5.
15. Because there are always those who question the authority of God’s Word, he says in verse 6, “ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”
16. In other words, God will judge those who practice these things regardless of what others may think. Don’t let anyone deceive you concerning this.
17. So he says in verse 6, *do not be deceived by their empty words*, and in verses 7-14, *do not be partakers with them in their sin*.

I. Do Not Be Deceived By Their Empty Words (v.6)

“Let no one deceive you with empty words.”

A. Unbelievers Always Question Morality

They question the very authority that prohibits them from such behavior.

“These sins have their apologists: some condone them as innocent pleasure; others excuse them as weakness; still others say this teaching is puritanical and a relic of outmoded standards” (KJV Bible Commentary).

1. They question morality with their “empty words”

Paul says their words are “empty.” They “contain no truth” (Hodge). They’re “without content or basis (BADG). They’re “full of error” (MacArthur).

2. Paul warns the Ephesians to not be deceived by these unbelievers

All they are doing is misleading you; leading you astray.

This exhortation to not be deceived is in the imperative mood which means he is commanding them not to listen to them. In fact, he also uses the present tense which indicates that some were already being led astray. To them he says, “Stop!”

3. What were these false believers saying to the Ephesians? That God would not punish those who practice the sinful lifestyle of verses 3-4. (See

Romans 1).

4. Paul already warned in verse 5 that those who practice these things has no “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”
5. Now he says it is “because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (v.6b).

In other words...

B. God Will Judge Those Who Practice These Things (v.6b)

“For because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”

John MacArthur says, “God's attitude toward perverted love and sexual sin is seen clearly in Numbers 25:1-9, where the Israelites had relations with Moabite women and God slaughtered 24,000 of them. His attitude toward sexual sin has not changed, and perverted love attracts God's wrath like a fully-lit city attracts enemy bombers” (Ephesians).

“The wrath of God is mentioned over 30 times in the N.T...God's wrath ‘comes’ (present tense), and is on a collision course with those who insist on their wicked lifestyle.”

“Those on whom God's wrath falls are the ‘disobedient,’ literally ‘the sons of disobedience,’ a Hebraism for people characterized by their refusal to obey God. They disobey the law of God, whether in written code or as ‘written on their hearts’ and confirmed by the voice of

conscience (Rom 2:15). The fact must not be ignored or forgotten: those who defy God deserve to face his wrath” (Kenneth L. Boles, Galatians and Ephesians, The College Press NIV Commentary: Eph.5:6).

“The children of unbelief in doctrine (De 32:20) are ‘children of disobedience’ in practice, and these again are ‘children of wrath’” (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments: Eph.5:6).

1. In Colossians 3:5-6, Paul told the Colossians to “consider the members of [their] earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ***For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come.***”
2. Paul groups these vices under two terms that are used synonymously in Romans 1:18. He says, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ***ungodliness and unrighteousness*** of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”
3. God will judge all those who refuse to repent of their sin
 - a) Acts 17:30-31 says, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because ***He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed***, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

- b) The book of Revelation is a record of the judgment of God on unrepentant sinners
- c) John the Baptist said to the “Pharisees and Sadducees” in Matthew 3:7-8 who came to see John’s baptism. “He said to them, ‘You brood of vipers, who warned you *to flee from the wrath to come?* 8 *‘Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance.’*”
- d) 2 Peter 3:3-7 (mockers in the last days who mock God’s judgment)

II. Do Not Be Partakers with Them in Their Sin (vv.7-14)

He says, “Therefore do not be *partakers* with them.”

In other words,

A. Do Not Become Partners (v.7)

“Here fellowship with wicked workers is forbidden” (JFB).

The word “partakers” (summetochos) means a “partner. One who shares together with another” (Rienecker).

He is telling them: “Don’t join the world in its evil”... ‘Don’t be partners with them in wickedness. Be partners with Christ in righteousness. Don’t imitate the world, but rather be imitators of God, as beloved children’ (v. 1)” (MacArthur).

2 Cor.6:14 says, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with

darkness?”

B. What You Were (v.8a)

“For you were formerly darkness.”

1. Jesus said in John 12:46, “I have come as Light into the world, ***so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.***”
2. When you believed, Colossians 1:13 says you were “rescued...from the domain of darkness, and transferred...to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”
3. You are now, according to 1 Peter 2:9-10, “A chosen race, A royal priesthood, A holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies ***of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*** 10 for you once were not a people, but now you are the people OF GOD; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”
4. This is what you were, as Ephesians 2:1-3 says, “dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Verses 11-12 says, “Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "***Uncircumcision***" by the so-called

"Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands—12 remember that you were at that time *separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*"

C. What You Are Now (v.8b)

"But now you are Light in the Lord."

Scripture speaks of God as our "light and...salvation" (Ps.27:1) and as "an everlasting light" (Isa.60:19). His Word is called "a lamp to [our] feet, and a light to [our] path" (Ps.119:105). Christ is called "a light of the nations" (Isa.49:6), "the true light which...enlightens every man" (Jn.1:9), and "the light of the world" (Jn.8:12).

As believers, who have been delivered from the domain of darkness, we are "sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness" as 1 Thessalonians 5:5 says.

"Scripture sometimes speaks of believers being in and of the light, but here we are said to be light. 'You are the light of the world,' Jesus said (Matt. 5:14).

Because we now share Christ's own nature, we share in His light. Just as He is the 'light of the world' (John 8:12), His people are also 'the light of the world' (Matt. 5:14).

Because we are in the Lord, we who were once children of darkness are now children of light, and it is as such children that we should walk" (MacArthur, Ephesians).

Paul says in verses 8-14 this is...

D. How We Are to Live (vv.8c-14)

1. We are to demonstrate the fruit of the light in verses 9-10.

“For the fruit of the Light consists in all *goodness and righteousness and truth*, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

The AV has “the fruit of the Spirit” but that does not appear in the better manuscripts. Paul is talking here about the characteristics of one’s life who is now “Light in the Lord.”

He mentions 3 characteristics or fruit of the light: goodness, righteousness, and truth.

- a) “Goodness” (agathosune) refers to “moral excellence, to being good in both nature and effectiveness.”

Thayer says this word is “found only in Biblical and ecclesiastical writings” to refer to “uprightness of heart and life” (Thayer’s Lexicon).

This word “finds its fullest and highest expression in that which is willingly and sacrificially done for others” (MacArthur)

- (1) Rom.15:14 says, “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of *goodness*, filled with all knowledge and able also to

admonish one another.”

(2) 2 Thess.1:11 says, “To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for *goodness* and the work of faith with power.”

b) “Righteousness” (dikaisune)

This word refers to our relationship to God and how we live.

“Those who are made righteous are commanded to live righteously, to present themselves ‘to God as those alive from the dead, and [their] members as instruments of righteousness to God’ (Rom. 6:13).

Because Christ has given us His own righteous nature, we are to ‘pursue righteousness’ (1 Tim. 6:11).

Because we know that Christ is righteous, John says, we also ‘know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him’ (1 John 2:29).

c) “Truth” (aletheia)

This “has to do with honesty, reliability, trustworthiness, and integrity-in contrast to the hypocritical, deceptive, and false ways of the old life of darkness” (MacArthur, Ephesians).

Without this *fruit* in a person’s life, there is no

evidence of God. If there is no evidence of God, then there is no evidence of salvation.

John MacArthur says, “A Christian can fall into sin, and when he does the fruitfulness of his life suffers. Righteous fruit cannot flourish from sin. But the complete absence of any fruit of goodness and righteousness and truth proves the complete absence of salvation” (Ephesians).

Jesus said in John 15:4-6, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 ‘I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 ‘If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.’”

Back in verse 10 of Ephesians 5, Paul says, “trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

The words “trying to learn” is the Greek word dokimazo which refers to the idea of proving or testing.

“As Christians learn and grow in goodness and righteousness and truth, they will give verification or evidence that they are who they claim to be, children of God and of light. The child of God will bear resemblance to the heavenly Father, who is his ‘light and ... salvation’ (Ps. 27:1)” (MacArthur, Ephesians).

Paul continues with what they are not to do in verse 11. He not to be deceived in verse 6, not to be partakers with them in those evil deeds in verse 7. Now he tells them...

2. We are not to participate in the deeds of darkness, we are to expose them (vv.11-14)

He says, “Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. 14 For this reason it says, ‘Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.’”

- a) We are not to “participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness” (v.11).

“Darkness” is referred to here as being “unfruitful” in contrast with those who are the children of light, which bear the “fruit” of the light.

The word “participate” (Sunkoinones, pres.act.imp.) means “to join in fellowship with someone, to have part in a thing” (Rienecker). This is a “joint-participation between two or more individuals in a common interest and a common activity” (Wuest).

- (1) James says in 4:4, “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a *friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*”

- (2) John says in 1 Jn.1:6, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet **walk in the darkness**, we lie and do not practice the truth.”
- (3) Proverbs 1:10 says, “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.”
- (4) Prov.1:15-16 continues, “My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path, 16 For their feet run to evil And they hasten to shed blood.”

- b) We are to expose those deeds for what they are (v.11b)

The word “expose” (elegcho) means “to reprove or rebuke” (Wuest).

- c) We are not “to speak of the things which are done by them in secret,” rather we are to expose it by “the light” (vv.12-13).

Our resource for exposing evil is Scripture, which is the light (Ps. 119:105, 130; Prov. 6:23; Heb. 4:13-13) and is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

As we confront those who are participating in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, whether it be a believer who is in sin or an unbeliever, we are to use the Word of God to expose them.

Paul says to those who are participating in these “disgraceful” deeds to “awake, sleeper,

and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (v.14).

The light of the glorious gospel exposes the disgraceful deeds of darkness and makes it visible. Only those who are repentant will come to the light and become children of light. And only those who are in the light will truly repent.

John MacArthur says, “We are to confront sin with intolerance. Sometimes such exposure and reproof will be direct and at other times indirect, but it should always be immediate in the face of anything that is sinful. When we are living in obedience to God, that fact in itself will be a testimony against wrong. When those around us see us helping rather than exploiting, hear us talking with purity instead of profanity, and observe us speaking truthfully rather than deceitfully, our example will itself be a rebuke of selfishness, unwholesome talk, and falsehood. Simply refusing to participate in a dishonest business or social practice will sometimes be such a strong rebuke that it costs us our job or a friendship. Dishonesty is terribly uncomfortable in the presence of honesty, even when there is no verbal or other direct opposition.

Often, of course, open rebuke is necessary. Silent testimony will only go so far. Failure to speak out against and to practically oppose evil things is a failure to obey God. Believers are to expose them in whatever legitimate,

biblical ways are necessary. Love that does not openly expose and oppose sin is not biblical love. Love not only ‘does not act unbecomingly’ itself but it ‘does not rejoice in unrighteousness’ ever it might be found (1 Cor. 13:5-6). Our Lord said, ‘If your brother sins, go and reprove him in private. ... If he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you. ... If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church’ (Matt. 18:15-17). This is the responsibility of every Christian (cf. 1 Tim. 5:1, 20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:15)” (Ephesians).

CONCLUSION

1. Are you imitating God in kindness, compassion, and forgiveness?
2. Are you imitating Christ by walking in sacrificial love?
3. Or are you participating in the unfruitful deeds of darkness?
4. Paul gives two warnings that you need to take heed to.
5. He says in verses 5-6, “For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an 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.”
6. Are you a “light” or “darkness” or a son “of disobedience”?
7. Your life will answer that question.

8. If you are “Light in the Lord,” then you will “walk as [a child] of Light” (v.8) and manifest the characteristics or fruit of Light, like “goodness, righteousness, and truth.”
9. Examine yourself tonight as we pray.
10. Let’s pray.