

# From Darkness to Light

REVIEW: Last week we left off with practices that Christians should be involved in. Things like: speaking truthfully, dealing with anger and not allowing it to turn into something sinful, working so they can share with others in need, speaking to build others up, along with many things to get rid of out of our lives.

INTRO: Today we enter a section focused more on what not to do. And there is a connection there that you might skip over between the last passage and today's passage.

Ephesians 5:3-14

- I. We start right out of the gate with abstaining from sexual immorality - 5:3-7
  - A. This may seem like a weird thing to change subjects to
    1. Our last passage we finished up talking about the sacrifice of Christ
    2. We talked about His love for us, and how it was a self-sacrificing love
    3. And this is the very connection between the two ideas!
  - B. In verse 2 Paul was focused on Christ's self-giving nature, and in verse 3 (the connection) is a contrast with our self-indulging nature
  - C. We, in Western cultural nations have an obsession with sex
    1. More than once people trying to advertise have used this ploy
      - a) A poster hung among many with the word "SEX" very large
      - b) Under that word you see something like, "Now that I have your attention, how about joining this club."
    2. Think about it - we use sex to sell all kinds things
      - a) Cars are called "sexy"
        - (1) How is that possible
        - (2) It is an inanimate object
      - b) Axe men's products - their line of ads make it seem as if all you have to do is use their products, soap, body wash, sprays, and the women will be flocking to you
  - D. Now, in Paul's day, lest you think they had it easy and we have it rough, they were no different and were probably worse
    1. The literature, artwork, and histories of the day tell us that sex was just as big a focus back then as now
    2. With religions that used sex in the worship experience
    3. With prostitution rampant
    4. With the attitudes of the day
      - a) It was okay for men to have as men women as they wanted - even if married
        - (1) It was even celebrated

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- b) But women had to be faithful to her spouse
  - c) Some places in the ancient world not only approved of homosexual practice, but celebrated it
- E. So is it any wonder, with the focus that we have on sex that Christians can be confused about sexual ethics?
1. Some of you, if you grew up in Christian homes, may have been brought up to believe that sex was bad
    - a) It may never have been stated that way, but the lack of honest conversation or teaching about it brought well meaning people to that conclusion
    - b) Rather, what should have been taught is that sex is a beautiful gift of God that increases intimacy in a way that nothing else can when done within the boundaries that God sets on it
  2. I know that Christians struggle with knowing what is right because of all the messages of the world
    - a) I have had some in my office that have told me about engaging in sex outside of God's boundaries
    - b) So Paul is helping us to adjust our thinking here
- F. There must not even be a hint of sexual immorality or any kind of impurity or greed
1. The word for sexual immorality is rightly translated
    - a) It is a very broad term
    - b) It refers to any kind of kind of sexual relationship outside of husband and wife
      - (1) So again, with the focus of the day allowing for men to indulge their sexual appetite any time they like, this was revolutionary in Paul's day
      - (2) Because Christianity IS counter cultural - we flow against the stream and we will always be thought weird
  2. The word for impurity is referring to the whole person
    - a) The text says "any kind of impurity"
    - b) So while this would obviously include sexual impurity, it does go beyond just that area of life
  3. Greed is in a different class here
    - a) The first two sins are "sins of the flesh"
    - b) Greed is an internal thing
      - (1) It is selfishness to an extreme degree
    - c) There are those that believe that this this refers to sexual greed or lust
      - (1) The commandment, "Do not covet your neighbor's wife" may be in view here

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- d) There are others that feel this is a general prohibition against greed in any form
  - (1) If you read Exodus 20:17, it prohibits more than just coveting your neighbor's wife as well
  - (2) It includes his house, his servants, etc.
- 4. Context is critical
  - a) But the best that I can say, especially since the term impurity is broader than just sexual impurity
  - b) The best I can say is that it is a general prohibition - but sexual greed or lust would obviously be included
- 5. Paul ends the sentence with a reminder that it is improper for God's holy people
  - a) In other words
  - b) These sins are completely contrary to what it means to be a Christian
- 6. A quick word here on what that means
  - a) Does that mean that a Christian cannot commit these sins or that they were not a Christian if they did commit one of these sins
  - b) Yes, Christian can fall into these sins, and no, it is not proof that they are not Christians
  - c) The reason I say this and am confident in this understanding is because of the tense of the Greek terms
    - (1) What is in view here is a lifestyle of these sins
    - (2) You cannot live your life following after these sins - it is totally contrary to what being a follower of Christ is like
- G. The next three vices listed are about a Christian's speech
  - 1. These vices occur only here in the NT
  - 2. The first of these is the word obscenity
    - a) All of the last few vices had to do with conduct
    - b) These next few have to do with speech
    - c) However, this word, rightly translated, actually is general in nature and refers to both speech and conduct
      - (1) There actually is a more specific form of this word to refer directly to speech
      - (2) That is how we know that this word is more general
    - d) That makes this word ideal as a bridge from the idea of conduct to the idea of speech because it can apply to both
  - 3. The second term of "foolish talk" means - ready - foolish talk
    - a) The idea brings to mind all the prohibitions from the OT about fools opening their mouths all too easily
  - 4. The final of these three terms is coarse joking

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- a) The idea is joking that goes too far
- b) It becomes either indecent or tears people down instead of building them up which Paul has talked about twice already in chs. 4-5
- 5. Again, Paul says these things are out of place - meaning out of place for Christians
- 6. Thanksgiving should be what comes from our lips
  - a) Thanksgiving forces attention toward God
  - b) Paul is also doing a play on words in the Greek
    - (1) The term for course joking and the word for thanksgiving are closely related
    - (2) So instead of course joking, thanksgiving that draws attention to God is in order
- H. Paul then goes on to provide some motivation in the form of warnings - 5-6
  - 1. The words “for this you can be sure” is literally “For this you know, knowing”
  - 2. He is reminding them of what they already know to be true
  - 3. No person like that (immoral, impure or greedy)
    - a) The Bible calls them idolaters. Why?
    - b) Because they are placing sex, lust, greed or some other form of impurity ahead of Christ
  - 4. No person like that will inherit the kingdom
    - a) And the kingdom is interesting
    - b) It says the kingdom of Christ and of God
      - (1) Paul tends to use the phrase “kingdom of God” when thinking of the future
      - (2) He uses the kingdom of Christ when thinking of the present phase of the rule of Christ
      - (3) Turn to 1 Cor. 15:24 - this is interesting
        - (a) So according to this, Christ has authority over the kingdom at present
        - (b) After He has destroyed all powers that set themselves against the kingdom, He hands the kingdom over to the Father - the future
- I. Paul then tells them not to be deceived by empty words because God’s wrath comes because of these disobedient people
  - 1. Here is where I want to slow down for a second
  - 2. Paul says not to be deceived by empty words
    - a) This is a reminder that we need to take to heart
    - b) There are so many people that spout off their ideas about sexual ethics

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- (1) As long as you're not hurting anyone, its okay
- (2) If you love each other, who's business is it of yours
- (3) We hear this regarding sex before marriage (which has almost become a given in our society)
  - (a) So here is honesty again - yes, I am still a virgin, but that has not always been easy
  - (b) There are days I want to yell at God, days I want to scrap the whole thing and tell God I want to do what I want
  - (c) But in the end, I know that being faithful to God's command in this area, only helps me to be faithful to my future wife, if she ever gets here
- (4) We also hear these arguments about same sex marriage
3. Paul does not want us to fall victim to the empty words
  - a) These are not God's ideas
  - b) God's ideas are being faithful in our sexual relationships
  - c) God's ideas are that Christians are not known to be like this, but the very opposite - we go against the culture
    - (1) Not just for the sake of going against the culture
    - (2) But because there are some areas of life God gave us boundaries, and in those areas, that is what we swim upstream for
4. Please note that in your bulletin, I have included two web links that help answer the question that many of us are intimidated by about the gay marriage issue - "You don't want to be on the wrong side of history?"
5. One other thing to note here is the idea of wrath
  - a) The Bible paints the picture of wrath being stored up like a cup, and eventually that cup will be poured out
  - b) This is where we as genuine believers can praise and thank God because of our faith in Jesus Christ, by God's grace, Jesus absorbed that wrath for us
    - (1) It is not that the wrath went away - because someone had to pay for our sin
    - (2) Jesus took our wrath for us - and because of that we will never face the wrath of God
- J. Paul's last thought in the paragraph is, "do not be partners with them"
  1. Just reinforces the idea
  2. We don't think like they do
  3. We don't act like they do
  4. Funny the order - don't fall victim to empty ideas (thinking) because thinking leads to action
- II. Paul then reminds us that we are living in the light - 8-14

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- A. Paul again reminds us of where we came from, and where we are now using the imagery of darkness and light
  - 1. Verse 8 really sums up much of Ephesians - the once-now idea
  - 2. But verse 8 also kind of shocks us because it declares that we are light
    - a) We have been called the light of the world
    - b) But this is bold and kind of in your face
  - 3. This goes back to the idea of the spheres of influence
    - a) When you lived in darkness we were darkness - we took on those characteristics
    - b) Now that we are in Christ, we live in the light, and take on those characteristics so in a very real sense, we are light in the Lord
- B. Paul next gives the command to live as children of the light
  - 1. Paul has used the expression before to “live as...”
  - 2. However I prefer the term walk - it is more proactive - walk as children of the light - or behave in a way that is consistent with who you are
  - 3. And the end of the sentence adds to that being proactive - “find out what pleases the Lord”
    - a) The word for “find out” is actually test, or approve
    - b) We are approving what pleases God - which are the things in the parentheses - the fruit of the light - goodness, righteousness and truth
- C. As light in Christ, we are not to have anything to do with the deeds of the darkness, but rather expose them
- D. Now these last three verses are a little difficult - but understanding them is helped greatly when we understand who is in view here
  - 1. Those in view are believers - believers that have associated themselves with the deeds of darkness
  - 2. Verse 13 is making clear that the light needs to fall on them, and expose the darkness that has crept into their lives
    - a) When the light comes in, they will become light
    - b) Here is where the battle lies for who these verses are about
      - (1) If it is about nonbelievers, the result would mean that if they were exposed to the light of Christ, they would automatically become believers
        - (a) Which we know people that can sit, listening to the truth of God’s Word in churches and still not be regenerated believers
        - (b) You could argue that they didn’t really receive the light because they are spiritually blind, but the verses says that all that has to happen is the light falls on them

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- (2) So, the better understanding is that this verse is about believers who need the light to expose the darkness that has crept into their lives
  3. Our final verse - verse 14 - is really a reminder to the believers that Paul is speaking to about their conversion - how they are changed from dark to light
    - a) Scholars debate whether this is taken from the OT, or if it is an old hymn that Paul was familiar with
    - b) Either way, it functions the same
    - c) Paul is reminding the readers how they were changed by the light at conversion
    - d) That same change occurs when believers have slipped into dark deeds that need to be exposed by the light again
- III. A few things we need to look at applying for ourselves from our text that we haven't already talked about
- A. Having nothing to do with the deeds Paul has mentioned
    1. Obviously sex outside of the bounds of God's provisions is off limits
    2. Most of us probably are not like the folks in ancient days that did not even try to hide their sexual exploits
    3. However, lets not make the mistake that Christians too often do of "well of course they are doing fine about sexual issues - their Christians!"
      - a) Because sex is ever present in our society it is an ever present issue
      - b) From lewd joking, pornography, lust, or sex outside God's design of marriage, we need to follow God's design
      - c) No making excuses - no giving ourselves a pass
      - d) The light of Christ is shining, and we need to respond to it
  - B. A second thing would be the separation from those that do practice such deeds
    1. Paul says "have nothing to do with them"
    2. One of the marks of a mature believer is understanding how to be with them so that we can have an influence on them, and yet not be influenced by them
      - a) If we are referring to an unbeliever, how will they ever know God's will, or who Christ is and what He did for them if we don't bring the light to them?
        - (1) Of course we need to be around them - but not influenced by them
        - (2) If we can't do that second part yet, than we should say away until we are stronger

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- b) If we are referring to believers that have stepped outside of God's revealed plan in His Word, we need to be around them to point them back to Christ
  - (1) In fact, in Galatians Paul will expand on that idea
  - (2) "You who are spiritual, restore such a one"
  - (3) It is our obligation to help an erring brother or sister to see the light and remind them of their commitment to Christ, plead with them to walk away from the darkness and back to the light of Christ
- C. The area of greed is another one
  - 1. All greed is sin, be it in the area of sexuality, or greed for other things
  - 2. I say that because it allows something other than God to order our lives
  - 3. This is one I think we often do not spend a whole lot of time considering because we are Christians! Of course we are not greedy!
    - a) Do we ever consider it greed when we tip and not tithe
    - b) Do we ever consider it greed when we have a certain standard of living and do little to help those who struggle - often thinking either we can't because we don't have enough, or thinking that they are the lazy Americans that frustrate us so we justify lack of help
    - c) Do we ever consider it greed when our driveway is lined with toys (snowmobiles, four wheelers, boats, bikes, cars, etc.) and others in the world, and even in our community struggle to put food on the table
    - d) Don't get me wrong, it is not a sin to have money or possessions
      - (1) The sin comes in when we are not being honest and introspective enough to see what motivates us
      - (2) The sin comes in when the money and possessions have us
  - 4. One of the solutions to this is giving thanks
    - a) When we give thanks to God we begin to see that these are gifts from Him
    - b) When that happens, it is amazing how our hearts become more generous because we realize just how blessed by God we really are
- D. The last thing is we need to leave the light on
  - 1. Max Lucado tells a story of a man pulling out some candles in a storm that knocks out the power
    - a) As he tries to press the candles into service they all begin to talk and tell the man why they cannot do their job of giving off light
    - b) Each has very well thought out excuses for why they cannot leave the closet and go light the house



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- c) Rather than telling his wife that he just had a conversation with some candles, he tells her that they would not work and asks where she got these candles
- d) Her reply, “Oh, they’re church candles”
- 2. Sadly, we as Christians have that as a tendency - we come up with reasons why we cannot shine the light
- 3. But that is the very thing we are commanded to do
- 4. But how do we do it?
  - a) Live in the light - be always aware of Christ, controlled by Him, and seeking what pleases Him
  - b) Refuse to partner with or participate in any of these sins
  - c) Instead go after the positive actions: doing good, righteousness, and truth
  - d) Then we stand as lights, we can better expose the darkness
- 5. Allow me to add a couple of other ways and we will be done
  - a) Christians as a whole need to get over the pride of seeming to have a perfect Christian life
    - (1) We know we don’t have that so why pretend
    - (2) We need to trust that when we show our cards, and show ourselves for what we are, we will receive grace
  - b) And if grace is what we are looking for, we need to be gracious
    - (1) We need to show grace to others willing to admit to their struggles and help them through
  - c) All of this needs to be in force for us to shine the light in the darkness in our own backyard and make sure that we as Christians are living the life God has called us to
    - (1) Lay down the pride
    - (2) Be gracious
    - (3) Seek Him - and when we do, we will see amazing changes!