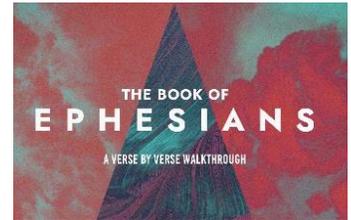


Title: Ephesians, Week 10, Avoid Darkness and Expose it with Light

Speaker: Corey Brown

Passage: Ephesians 5.1-14

Big idea: To imitate God and walk as Light, we must avoid and expose darkness.



In the last sermon in our Ephesians series, Pastor Charles talked about the taking off the old self, and putting on the new self. Paul is going to continue that same idea in these next verses of chapter 5, but he changes the imagery from taking/putting, to darkness and light.

Now Ephesians 5, primarily focuses in on a particular set of sin issues, sexual immorality.

This is a sin issue that plagues not only the world in which we live but infiltrates the lives of Believers far too easily. Paul spends so much time in this Ephesians letter about this issue because it was prevalent in the Ancient near east mystical religions, and in roman pagan worship. Sexual deviance and orgies were part of the common place in false god temple worship.

Here is this week's Big Idea:



Ephesians 5: ¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ³ 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 become partners 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."

Ephesians 5:1–2 ESV Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

vs 1 you are a beloved child of God - adopted into his family, like Ephesians 1:5 says, so do the things God does, to be holy like God is holy - set apart and consecrated for his purposes.

The imitators of God part flows very freely from the previous section that Pastor Charles explained the week 9, that we are to put off the old self, and put on the new self.

vs 2 and walk in the love of Christ, what does walking in love look like - self-sacrificial love, which is pleasing and fragrant to God. This is the idea of a burnt offering of the OT, where God would say he loved the aroma of their sacrificial offerings, Jesus is the ultimate aroma that is pleasing to God, and so we are to live like him in self sacrificing ways.

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

So, in opposition to the things of Jesus, and walking in self-sacrificial love are these things:

Sexual Immorality - Paul uses the blanket word *porneia*, to suffice for all sexual activity outside of God's design in sex for human flourishing.

sex with someone who is not your spouse, sex in a demeaning way, porn, homosexuality, perversion etc. - God has a disdain and hate for all things that sexual sin is and brings forth.

Impurity - (anti-holiness) Greek Word****akatharsia**** - uncleanness moral corruption.

actions that do not express self-giving love

covetousness, or literally Greed for Self-Indulgence - Greek Word****Pleonexia**** primarily used in regard to sexual vices.

these three things, are not even to be named among you - or they are not to be your walk.

These things should never mark the Christian - it is improper for them to be seen as the actions of a Christian -

It seems as though what Paul is doing here is building on the same issue of sexual sin, that he says that sexual sin, sexual impurity, and sexual greed must not be named among you.

Isn't this a poignant statement for our culture of oversexualized western society.

- Want to stand out as a Christian in the world - what to be seen as different. hold to the Bible's sexual ethic.

When I was younger and working retail at a store, before Caitlyn and I were married, my co-workers were astonished to have met a 25-year-old guy who was not engaged in sexual intercourse. It is so foreign to the ideas of our culture. I was laughed at, mocked, and thought of as too old fashioned, and overly religious.

Whether you agree with God's view of sexuality or not is irrelevant - you should of course agree with God, he designed sex - but instead understand that these "restrictions" are for your benefit and flourishing.

While the world's thinking in an overly sexualized culture, about sex is that it is the pinnacle of human experience to be gained at all costs and is for your own self gratification - this is NOT what the bible teaches.

While Our Flesh desires sexual experience and we are tempted in every way with regard to sexuality in our world, our Bodies are not our Masters.

While the Devil promises that it won't hurt anyone, that just once isn't a problem, that it will be delightful and pleasurable, or that we deserve our desire for sex outside of God's boundaries. The Devil is a liar, bent on your destruction.

God's Design of Sex is between One Bio-man, and One Bio-woman, committed in the covenant of Marriage for a lifetime.

Tim Keller speaks about sex as the re-covenanting of our marriage vows.

"But though covenant is necessary for sex, sex is also necessary for covenant. The covenant will grow stale unless we continually revisit and re-enact it. Sex is a covenant renewal ceremony for marriage, the physical re-enactment of the inseparable oneness in all other areas—economic, legal, personal, psychological—created by the marriage covenant. Sex renews and revitalizes the marriage covenant."

4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

The Wording of vs 4 about the words we say is actually much more specific than just your garden variety bad words, and of course we shouldn't make a habit of utilizing things that are offensive - but instead - verse four carries the same type of argument from before - Paul now urges Christians not to speak of anything sexual in a joking manner

One great commentary says it this way

- Ephesians–Philemon (Comment)
Paul continues (Eph. 5:4) to urge his readers to avoid certain vices, with this triad emphasizing sins of speech that carry sexual connotations.

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.

Paul says that you may be sure - its the idea of complete certainty, that no one who participates in these acts inherits the kingdom

Does that mean that if I struggle once with sexual sin, I'm cast out of God's grace and Jesus' kingdom? Does this mean I can lose my salvation?

No - we cannot lose our salvation - what Paul is addressing here is that those who are part of the Kingdom will be so opposed to these things that even if it does happen, even when we do fail, our response is that of a true Christian, repentance and faith.

Why does Paul qualify Greed/Covetousness with the parenthetical?

Because Greed is a form of dissatisfaction, which is a form of Pride - believing we deserve better and more, taking the Place of God believing we could run our lives better than he can, thinking that we can design human flourishing as a created being, better than the creator.

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

The **YOU** of verse 6 is likely speaking about Christians, since that is the audience Paul is speaking to, so he's saying, don't allow others to deceive Christians with empty words - lit - "redefining God's law".

This is the idea of being taken captive by lies - believing falsehood, or misrepresenting God's truth designs, and because of our desire to be our own God, God's wrath against sin comes on the sons of disobedience.

Sons of disobedience, those who are false teachers, teaching false doctrines as truth.. mis-representing God's truth and looking for personal gain.

7 Therefore do not become partners with them;

Don't believe the lies of false teachers, and those who propagate misrepresentation of God's word. Don't participate in these things with them - don't buy it, and don't sell it.

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),

You *WERE* darkness, not you were in darkness - and this is not a translation mistake, the literal is that we were darkness, in the past - before Christ, we were completely opposed to God and his kingdom ways,

but...now you Are Light - this is an issue of identity - you are not defined by your actions before Christ, nor if in repentance are you defined by your struggles in Christ - you *Are*. - the fruit of light is that we live what is good, right and true

To get a better handle on the thought we need to have these verses back-to-back. Vs 8-10

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.

Walk as children of light - and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord - Paul has already told us that what is pleasing to the Lord is that we don't engage in these sins, that we live in our identity - so what he's saying here is learn it, do it all the more, continue in growth in this.

11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

Again, the command/imperative - do not take part in the unfruitful because walking in the light is what produces good fruit.

Instead of participation - *EXPOSE* it. the word expose is - the idea of sternly admonishing change when the action is discovered - so Paul is saying - the Christians living in works of darkness, *Sternly Rebuke Them*, warning them of these evils to their soul, and flourishing.

Because...

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,

These things Paul is speaking about goes here in 12, back to the initial argument - that these sorts of things aren't to be named, not to be spoken of as in God's people, these things are terribly evil, and its shameful to speak of these evil things- how much worse to do them.

Shameful = *disgraceful*, it brings disgrace on the person.

The response however is repentance, when it is exposed BY the light - Christ, it becomes visible - we see it for what it is. We can't see it in darkness; it doesn't seem evil while in the dark. But when light is shone on it, then we see it for what it truly is - only Jesus can do that in our hearts through the understanding of God's word.

then Paul ends with an interesting little part here in 14,

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."

The little stanza that we see here - seems a little funny - it is actually a combination or a few different places in the OT scriptures from Isaiah 60, but because it includes and Christ will shine on you - means that this was likely a teaching that was brought into the NT era, with this being a hymn from the early church.

So, with all of this understanding, what are we to do? How do we live out the Big idea?

BIG IDEA

To Imitate God and walk as Light,
we must Avoid & Expose Darkness

Understanding & Applying

1. View Sex and sexual sin with seriousness, not levity. vs 3-4

Paul expresses that Sexual immorality (porneia) of any kind, impurity (non-holiness), and greed must not be named among the Christians, the acts of sexual sin are NOT to be in the lives of Christians, but he doesn't stop here, he continues, in expressing that we are not to allow and filthy, foolish, or foul joking to be part of how we talk about sin, and in particular, sexual sin.

But we are to instead, be marked by thanksgiving.

It doesn't take much scrolling through the TV, Netflix, etc. to find that sex is the topic of most sitcoms. and while, we are free as Christians to watch what we want, to enjoy art in its forms, jokes about sexual sin should not be named among us... Ask yourself the question, not is it okay to watch these things, but instead, is it wise to watch it. Instead of thinking - is this a joke that will get a laugh - instead think - is this joke honouring to God and his good design for my flourishing

Because the consequences are significant. Look at vs 5.

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.

There is significance to this - continued un-repentant acts in these sin areas disqualifies someone of salvation

2. Don't be deceived and taken back into darkness - vs 6-8

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

- Paul is saying - don't be easily swayed by the arguments of men, or emotional responses to God's stance on sexual sin. He is clear, direct, and forward about this
- Paul says that people (who are darkness) will try and deceive you - with "empty words"
- Empty words (re-definitions)
- Many focus their thinking on a different version of sin, they create their definitions of sin based on experience, or feelings, but not on the foundational truths of God's objectively true word.
- Because when we throw out God's view of sin, we are creating our own versions, and placing ourselves in God's judgement seat about holiness.
- The reason we are not to do this, is because God's wrath is coming on those who are disobedient.

In this case - we are speaking clearly of what Paul mentions but does this mean no Christian can ever have a struggle with sexual sins. Of course not. but it is that we will not persist in them, we will not hide it, or try and excuse it. We will take a posture of repentance and get accountability to that we aren't believing the re-definitions/empty words about sin, in our world.

7 Therefore do not become partners with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

Verse 7&8 are very interesting, because in this battle against sin and perversion, we are not to enact anything other than what we *Are* - the fight here, not to participate is an issue of identity.

Verse 7

- Therefore / partners,
- This doesn't mean we ostracize people who struggle with sexual sin and have an attitude of repentance. It also doesn't mean we don't have relationships with non Christian people who have a different view of sexuality (a wrong view),
- Partners means that we participate, we engage in the same activity - we act as they act - this is not to be the case why?

Verse 8

- Because at one time - we *Were* Darkness.
 - Not that we were in darkness, we *Were* it.
- That seems like maybe Paul is overstating, but no he means exactly this.

Before you came to Jesus in faith and repentance, before you were gloriously saved from sin, satan, death and hell, you were at complete enmity with God. We all were. our natural tendency is to be anti - God, believing ourselves to be the master of the universe, believing we can define right and wrong for ourselves, etc.

The Bible speaks clearly about our being Dead in Sin, there's nothing darker than death, because death is anti-God. Death is the complete opposite of God and his character. God is life, and life giving, Jesus clarifies this when he says

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

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),

You, *Were*, darkness - hopeless and without ability for change,

Then the next bit, this fantastic response from Paul to the dire situation we were before Christ

BUT NOW

Oh, if we would live our lives with a But Now mentality - training our thinking, surrendering to Jesus' lordship with a posture of gratitude, and an attitude of BUT NOW - the victories we would see in our own lives, over sin.

Notice that Paul doesn't qualify that we are *in* light, but instead proves his point with a declarative, the identity statement that we *ARE* light.

By the very presence of Christians in the world, the darkness loses.

We positionally, in Christ, are Light. We illuminate places of darkness, sin, death and destruction with the gospel of Light, that shines through because of the Work of Christ for the world.

So the response is like the beginning,

“Be Imitators of God”

“Walk as children of the Light”

Walk the way that your father walks, walk the way that Jesus walks, be against sin and all its destructive power in your life, and turn towards him more and more.

3. Do not participate in darkness but expose it for the lie it is. vs 11-13.

11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

We live in a world of great self indulgence. The idea of delayed, or hindered self gratification, seems like an un-evolved, ancient practice of denying your “true-self”.

Paul says to us, don't participate; don't live this way. You're different. You're light. You're not bound as darkness, you aren't opposed to God and his design for your life.

DO Different, BE who you are in identity - BE LIGHT, and by being light, expose darkness.

Point 1: View Sex and sexual sin with seriousness, not levity. vs 3-4

Point 2: Don't be deceived and taken back into darkness - vs 6-8

Point 3: Do not participate in darkness, but expose it for the lie it is. vs 11-13.

Many of you know that I love to play golf. It is actually the activity I love the most and am worst at. I'm the worst golfer in comparison to how much I love it. Sometimes though, I'll like to just go and play on my own... and will get paired up with some random other golfers. and inevitably after a few holes, and getting comfortable with each-other the question comes... so... "what do you do for work?" This always ends up being a tense moment for me, and I'll explain why.

On the golf course, or in the hockey locker room or whatever people feel free to be themselves, likely because they are like the people they hang around with so there will be swearing and crude joking and anger etc. But as soon as they hear my response, "Oh, I'm a pastor at a church in town", the tone of the conversation changes... the guys I play with will suddenly become more aware of their language, and conduct... They'll be apologetic when the curse, as if I've never heard or said those words before myself.

In being a Christ follower, you automatically by the very nature of who you are in Christ, expose darkness - if you don't participate in it. If you don't partner with the darkness, you just do expose it.

I'm sure you've had some of these same experiences yourself.

But, when we shed light onto the sin, when we bring the truth of God's good and glorious design for human flourishing to the forefront... when the light of the Gospel touches sin... Sin gets exposed for what it is, wrong, destructive, and deadly.

Here's what needs to happen now to live in the light

1. Your Action needs to exemplify your Identity or "Become what you Are".

- Being In Christ means that you are no longer *darkness* but have become *light*. Paul uses these words specifically to express that before Jesus not only did, we act "darkly", but that we were totally opposed to the things of God, and dead to God.
- So, we need to be aware of our conduct, be monitoring our actions and behaviours, and quick to repentance when challenged and convicted.

2. Community is necessary to walk in the light.

- While all of us are responsible for our own actions, the language of Ephesians is not a letter directed to one individual, but to a church, a people, a community.
- The ideas presented here in Ephesians are to be lived out personally in community. Giving others permission to call us out when we are out of step giving them permission to judge our behaviour.

Some will say though, "Oh pastor Corey, we aren't supposed to judge Christians."

Where did we get that idea from? Its not in the bible.

Of course, we are not to be hypocrites expressing a grandiose attitude of holier than thou, but a significant care for the spiritual condition of our brothers and sisters.

Look at what the Apostle Paul writes elsewhere regarding this.

12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?

Here's what's great - there is no explaining this away. The verse doesn't mean the opposite of what it says.

What if our churches were seen as soft and gracious to a world that doesn't know better (they're in darkness), and instead turned our attention to the behaviours of those inside the family. And before anyone of us thinks this teaching is a singular incident, Paul actually says the same things in 5 other passages.

Action steps this week if you struggle with Sexual Sin

1. Confess and Repent of any sexual sin issue in your life to a close friend, mentor, or pastor.
2. Be Free in the knowledge that when you Confess Jesus is quick to and able to forgive your sin.
3. Stop Participating in sexual sin of all its varieties *porneia* (porn, affairs, conquest, fornication etc)
4. Invite Help from a spiritual leader or a counselor.
5. Claim the victory and Freedom the Gospel buys you by living your identity of Light.