



THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS 5:1-14

Walking Worthy of the Calling, part 3: Walking in Love and in Light

Pastor Anthony Ferguson

Several years ago, my wife and I went Mammoth cave in south, central Kentucky which is the longest cave system known in the world: 400 miles long. We went on the lantern tour. There is no light on this tour besides the lantern. Now, caves are dark. The sun does not rise in a cave; caves are dark. Toward the end of the tour, the tour guide wanted to illustrate the fact that a little light exposes reality amid darkness. So, she had us turn off our lanterns. We sat amid darkness. She then turned on a litter, and you could see the contours of her hand. A little light was beginning to expose reality amid the darkness. This is what we are called to do. We are called to be light amid the darkness in order to expose reality, and Paul addresses this point in this passage.



Now, the text that I am preaching today– Ephesians 5:1-14 – is really two sections. In verses 1-6, Paul calls us to walk in love. Then, in verses 7-14, Paul calls us to walk in light. We will cover both ideas here – walking in love and in light.

Before we get into the text today, let's remind ourselves of the context. Ephesians 1-3 is a beautiful explanation of the gospel – we were dead in our sins, but God in his mercy pursued you and me. He saved us and made us his children. He decided in his divine freedom to be most glorified in showering us with grace. Next, Paul transitions in Ephesians 4-6 to explain that the gospel should change us. In Ephesians 4:1-16, we learned that the gospel should compel us to prize unity at all cost. Then, In Ephesians 4:17-32, Paul taught us that we are to walk in holiness. Today, we learn that the gospel propels us to walk in love and in light (5:1-14).

Let's investigate these truths together.

*“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise”*



WALK IN LOVE (EPHESIANS 5:1-6)

“*Therefore 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.*”

Walking in love means we do something (1-2). First, he calls us to imitate God, and we do this as beloved children. We are not to imitate him as a student imitates a teacher or as a new employee imitates a trainer. These relationships – student/teacher and employee/trainer – fall short of the point Paul is making here. Rather, the image Paul uses is father/child. This image is incredibly powerful since this relationship is characterized by imitation. Whether it is brushing my teeth, doing a summersault, or high

jumping the footboard of our bed, my children try to imitate me. Why? because I am their father, and I love them dearly. Their imitation of me, something every father here has likely experienced, demonstrates how intuitive and natural this response is – children imitate their fathers. This is especially true when that children know that they are beloved by their fathers.

Church, God loves us – those who have turned from their sin and trusted in Jesus are beloved of God, not because we are lovable ourselves: we are not. I know myself too well to pretend that something in me compels God to love me. Rather, God's loves us because God is loving and he has decided to set his love on us despite us. This is God's glorious grace, and this image captivates us and compels us to imitate him.

Second, Paul is more specific: we are to imitate God by walking in love. Now our love is to be marked by Christ's love. This truth again illustrates that the gospel is the heartbeat of the Christian life. What motivates Christian love? Not guilt or manipulation but something far greater – Christ's love for us. Now, love is a word that is easily confused today. Love is not a feeling of happiness although it at times is accompanied by feelings of happiness; rather, it is a commitment to give yourself for the good of others. This is how Paul describes love in verse 2: "Christ gave himself up for us." Walking worthy of our calling means that we love others like Christ loved us.

Walking in love means we do not do some things (3-6). In verses 3-4, focus on our actions and our speech. These actions include sexual immorality, which is a term that often refers to sex prior to marriage, impurity refers to homosexuality in Romans 1, and covetousness which is a general term referring to greed, but not just of money, but to satisfying the craving for more at all cost. These things, church family, are diametrically opposed to walking in love. Now, many in our society condemn Christianity at this point. They yell, “What does my sexuality have to do with God!” The answer is everything!

Remember, God made this universe as a theater for his glory. Everything in this universe when operating correctly reflects something of God’s character including sex. This is evident from the fact that the marriage image is used to describe our relationship to God. The church is the bride of Christ; Hosea marries Gomer, a prostitute, in order to describe God’s relationship to Israel. Moreover, Paul will discuss in detail in Ephesians 5:22-32 how marriage picture Christ and the church. Therefore, sex is a picture that points beyond itself to something greater, but when we twist sex so that it no longer points to Christ, we do not picture God, but Satan. Let this never be for those who love God. Love for God’s glory should drive us from immorality to wholehearted imitation of our heavenly father.



In verse 4, Paul focuses on the speech that does not fit with our calling. He combines together the ideas of filthiness and foolish talk. Filthy refers to “ugliness” and, again, is a general term to describe obscene things. Foolish talk refers to senseless speech. Finally, crude joking is humor that is meant to harm and embarrass others. Each of these topics refers to speech that tears others down and indulges self. The focus is indulging self, not pleasing or praising Christ.

This is why the antidote to these vices is thankfulness (4). The thankful person focuses on the God and how he has provided more than enough – let’s remember Ephesians 1-3. The thankful person recognizes the gifts they have received from God whereas the greedy person focused on self and on getting more. Walking in love is characterized by thankfulness, not filth.

Now Paul appeals to several important motivations that should propel us to imitate God and flee filthy conduct and speech. First, in verse 3, Paul explains that these sins do not fit the saints. In other words, they are absolutely contrary to our identity as children of God. Walking in these sins is like me wearing an XXL shirt. It just doesn’t fit. Likewise, these sins just do not fit the believer.

Second, Paul explains how greed, in particular in verse 5, is religious to the core: that is, idolatrous to the core.



The conduct and speech listed above all flow from a person who is living to gratify themselves, and this is idolatry, since true worship of God leads the worshiper to live for God and others, not self. Living for self is idolatry since it exalts self to the place of God.

Epitome of sin

Third, those who live a life gratifying the flesh go to hell (6). Paul 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.” If a person persists in sexual sin or greed without repentance, they will go to hell. Now verse 6 is not saying that if you have every committed sexual sin or been greedy, you go to hell. This is not what it is saying. Nor is it saying that if you have ever been tempted to sexual sin or greed, you go to hell. That is not what this is saying. Rather, Paul is explaining that those who persist in these sins, for whatever reason, go to hell. That means everything that Paul has said in Ephesians 1-3 about the glorious blessings of knowing God and being redeemed by God is not real for this person. This person does not truly believe the gospel; their hearts have not been captured by the God of this universe because every heart that has been captured by the God of this universe desire to please that God more than self.



Now, deception is easy. We can deceive ourselves by defining grace cheaply. We might define grace only as forgiveness of sins and not as transformation. This is deceptive since grace transforms us to be new creation. We might be deceived by others who tell us that God will not judge the sexual immoral. This too is deceptive, just read verse 6! Church family let's not be deceived. Grace woe us to walk in love. If this is not the case for you, beg God to help you see the hell that awaits your sin and the glory that awaits those who trust in Christ.

Church family we are called to walk in love which means we give ourselves for the good of others; we are not to live for self-gratification where we use others for the good self. Church family let's walk in love for God and others, not self.

WALK IN LIGHT (EPHESIANS 5:7-14)

“*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.”* ● ● ● ● ●

Walking in the light means that we do not partner with sons of disobedience (7-10) Paul describes partnering with unbelievers as contrary to our identity. Notice in verse 7 how Paul explains that we are light in the Lord; we are no longer in darkness (5:8; see also 4:18).

Therefore, when Paul exhorts us to walk in the light, he is encouraging us to walk according to our identity.

The light is our identity, and the fruit of this identity is good. The fruit is goodness, righteousness, and truth (9). Compare these things to the fruit of our old life – filthiness (4), foolishness (4) crudeness (4), and impurity (5). Paul is reminding us that our new life yields good fruit such as a nice, big, juicy, meaty avocado. The old life only yielded shivered, dry, avocados with big pits and no meat.

Paul then describes the manner in which we should walk in the light: by discerning what is pleasing to the Lord. Now, on the one hand, walking in the light is not a mystery. God is not hiding his will from us. Some of us may think of God as a cosmic trickster who hides his will from us and then accuses us when we do not perform. Church family this is a picture of Satan, not God. God does not hide his will from his people. The Bible reveals God's will to us. We have learned in Ephesians 5 that God's will is for us to walk in love.



His will is never for us to engage in sinful conduct like sexual immorality nor is his will ever for us to engage in sinful speech such as crude joking. We do not need to try to discern God's will in these matters; he has made it plain to us.

On the other hand, the Bible does not provide a direct answer to many other decisions. You will not find in the pages of Scripture a direct answer to many important decisions that you'll need to make such as which college to attend, which Christian to marry, what job to pursue, or where to live. Yet, God does not hide these things from us either. Rather, by means of discerning and wisdom, we can learn what pleases God. This is what we are called to do.

Walking in the light means we discern God's will for our life rather than partnering with unbelievers.

Walking in the light means that we do not partner in their sinful deeds (11-14). Walking in the light also entails that we do not partner with the sinful deeds of non-Christians. We could describe this negatively: do not do what they do. However, Paul does not describe walking in the light this way. He did describe walking in love that way. Rather, he describes walking in light as exposing the sins of non-Christians.



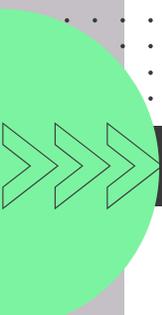
Now, I know what many of you are thinking – exposing the sins of non-Christians seems judgmental and mean. By notice what Paul says. He tells us that exposing their sins is actually life-giving and kind! Exposing sinful deeds is life-giving because exposing these deeds brings them to the light. Walking in the light, then, means we bring other people to the light (14). We do whenever we preach the gospel to them. When we preach the gospel, we start with sin. We explain how we are separate from God because of sin – we expose it. However, our goal is not merely to expose their sin, but to be the means that God uses to work salvation in their life. This is why Paul quotes in verse 14 what may be an old Christian hymn or saying. He does this to describe the purpose that ought to govern our interaction with non-Christians. Our purpose is to call them to life and to get up from sleeping! Church family our interactions with non-Christians must be characterized exposing their sin, pointing them to Jesus, and calling forth life. This is how we walk in the light.

If we neglect this purpose, a dangerous reality lurks around us. Non-Christians associate with us on purpose. Their purpose is to recruit you as their partners (7) and as those who take part in their sin (11). Church family if you have associated with non-Christians you know what I am talking about. Those who engage in sexual



immorality love to recruit others to do the same. This is one of the reasons why the world is fascinated with parading sexual immorality around. The reason why filthy jokes is so prevalent is that non-Christian want validation that their filth is acceptable. Non-Christians are associating with you on purpose. Now, they may not know it, but Satan knows it.

Do you see how prevalent the concept of spiritual warfare is in the book of Ephesians? Our interactions with non-Christians is a battle between cosmic forces as Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:12. So be ready, church family. Be ready to walk in the light by not partnering with non-Christians but by exposing their sin for the sake of their eternal joy.



CONCLUSION

There is a lot at stake church family. So let's take with complete seriousness the gospel. Christ's love for us transforms us so that we are new creation defined by Christ's love and his light. Thus, 1) let's walk in love – let's give ourselves for others, not for self. 2) Thus, let's walk in light – let's preach the gospel to others and call forth for new life. Each member of the Trinity works toward the salvation of the lost. Let's take this seriously for the joy of the lost.