

LOVING THE WALK OF LIGHT

Sermon by Scott Lowther

Ephesians 5:1-14

October 2, 2011

I do want to make you aware that we are going to talk about a lot of issues that touch pretty much everybody in this room. I'll probably say some things that might bother some of you. The intent isn't to bother you; the intent is to be faithful to the text. So we are going to talk about things like homosexuality, pornography and coveting. Paul is going to give us 6 things that he wants to give us to flee from. Those things in various shapes or forms come upon all of us. The intent isn't to be a finger pointer; the intent is to see what God's remedy for those things are. We are going to pray that God gives us great grace and we'll see what the Lord speak to us. So let us pray together.

Father, thank you so much for the opportunity to be in your house. Thank you more so for the fact that you Lord will send your spirit to teach us and lead us and guide us into truth and Lord we ask that you would do that. I pray Lord, that the words that are spoken today would be pleasing in your sight, they would be acceptable to you, and I pray Lord that you would send forth your word to accomplish all that you ordained. And we thank you for it and we ask these things in Jesus' most wonderful name and everybody said. Amen.

Ok, let me give you a quick update on my friend Lonnie. She is out of the hospital, she's out of a coma, and she's at home so thank the Lord for that. The guy that she ran over and put in critical condition in a coma, he's now home, so the Lord was good to him as well. I got a chance to visit with my friend and talk to her and her family and it was a great opportunity and the Lord was very faithful to her. I managed to share a little bit with her. She said when she was dead, because she was technically dead, she said, "I didn't see a light". So I asked her if she saw anything else. She said "No, I didn't see the other side either." So we talked a little bit about that and we talked about how her experience shaped her faith and what she thought God wanted to have her around for the rest of her life for. She said all of a sudden death made things look very clear and so it snapped her out of a previously held position that she had in a lot of issues. So God was really good and He's been faithful.

Then you know I smashed my Blackberry and God taught me a lot of lessons through that so I'll share some of those as we go forward and I have one application for that that we'll talk about today.

So we are going to start this text today. We are going to talk specifically about Walking in the Light, being a person who loves walking in the light. If you have been with us for any length of time you know we have been looking at the Book of Ephesians. The first 3 chapters are all doctrine and the last 3 chapters talk about how we live, how we walk, how we fight. Not Al-Queda kind of Jihad fighting but how we fight spiritually and we'll look a lot at that in Chapter 6. Today we are going to look at Chapter 5, the first few verses there, and we're going to talk about the continuing part of Paul's admonition from

Chapter 4 to walk in a manner worthy of the calling that we received. So this is all about walking, all about our behavior and that's always based upon doctrine that we had in the beginning. So the Book of Ephesians is great about that. It tells you things you need to know, and then based on what you know, this is how it is modeled and lived out in your life.

This is one of the things Lonnie and I talked about. The best use of one's life is to spend it for something that will outlast it. I asked her, "*What's going to outlast your life? Is there going to be anybody who is happy that you lived?*" She said, "*Gosh, I don't know.*" I said, "*Is there anything that is going to go on after you die or past your kid's generation that anybody will know anything about you?*" She said, "*Why would I care?*" I said, "*Because God put you on the earth so that you would be useful in His kingdom and each of us as we walk with the Lord, we should leave behind those things that cause other generations, should the Lord tarry, be grateful that we lived. That there are people that we impacted; that there are things that we have done that have somehow made the kingdom of Christ better than if we have never been here at all.*" Part of that comes with an understanding of how we are to live and how we are to behave and how we are to walk and function in our world today.

Let's look at what Paul tells us about that: ***Ephesians 5:1-14*** ¹ ***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.*** 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."***

We are going to talk about this thing called "the walk" and how we are supposed to behave, what should be true of our life, and what should people see when they look at us. A Christian's walk is not so much characterized by perfection but it is totally characterized by direction. It's not so much that you are perfect in all that you do but you should be going a certain way. In the early church the apostles were called "The Way". What this is telling us is we are to live a certain kind of way. Not perfectly but we should be going a certain direction. It's very critical as we are talk about behaviors, I mentioned this before but if you are visiting today, it's really critical that you understand if you don't have the gospel in there, if you don't have the "how" this is going to be true of me or "how" this is going to change me, if you don't have the gospel, then all you have is a bunch of legalistic prohibitions and commands in the word, which according to Paul in **2 Corinthians 3:6** becomes the "**letter that kills.**" So if I just sit up here and say "*don't drink, don't chew, don't date girls who do*", it becomes this commanding, demanding,

legalistic burden that you say, *“That’s fine for you to say but how does that work?”* If I just say, *“Don’t commit adultery, don’t be a fornicator”* – how does that work? How am I not to do those things? What empowers me to not do those things? How should I look for relief if I am stuck in those things? We have to have the gospel in there because success and morality without Jesus Christ is spiritual suicide. You’ll end up, even if you do kind of good at it on the man’s curve of things, you’ll still end up as a **Matthew 7:22** *“Lord, Lord, didn’t I do mighty works in your name? Didn’t I do this?”* You’ll hear, *“Depart from me, I never knew you.”* So you have to have the gospel in the commands of God for your own benefit, for your own success in them and ultimately for your own joy in eternity with them.

So let’s break this down a verse at a time and look at some real, obvious, clear, thoughts of Paul.



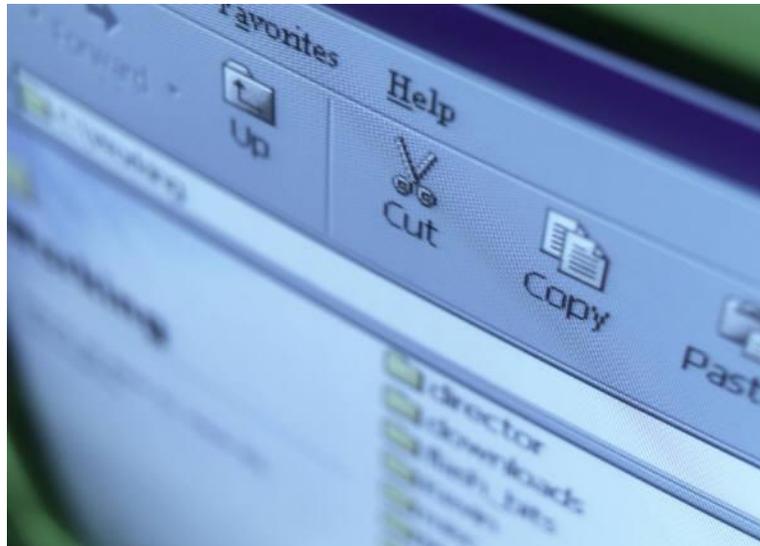
VERSE 1

“ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.” The basis is when we talk about “walk worthy” we are to walk in a fashion that reflects the character and nature of who our God is. People should learn who God is based on how we behave, based on how we speak, and they should learn things about Him just by observation of His children. It says the basis for imitating God is not that we try to figure out who He is and copy Him; it’s that we imitate Him because we are His children.

Look at **1 John 3:9** *“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning* (it means they don’t habitually live sinfully) *for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot* (it’s not he doesn’t or he enables himself not to) *keep on sinning because he has been born of God.”*

So if we are going to walk with the Lord, if we are going to imitate God, you have to see that this comes from the fact that a Christian has been born again by God’s spirit and God’s spirit enables him to fulfill what God requires. A Christian cannot keep on sinning because God’s spirit will not allow him or her to keep on sinning. Somebody who is a Christian should say, *“Alleluia, thank God for His delivering power*

that won't leave me as I am but will constantly move me to conform me into the image of His Son." If you're not saying that, if you say, *"Well I'm enjoying my sin too much"*, maybe that's one of the things that God wants to deliver you from today. He wants to show you the reality of it so that you want to be delivered from it. The first step in being delivered from something is admitting that it is a really big issue and that it's sin and you call it sin and you seek the Lord to deliver you from it. Not say, *"I'm enjoying it so much I don't want to be delivered from it."* Well that in itself is a sin. We have to see that if we are going to walk with the Lord, if we are going to imitate the Lord, it begins by God regenerating us, **God working in us that which is pleasing to Him, God working in us to will and to do for his pleasure.**



VERSE 2

Verse 2 elaborates verse 1. How am I supposed to be an imitator of God?

“And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” So his elaboration in verse 2 is piggy backing on verse 1. He's saying Christ is the pattern, the pattern of how we are to live. We are to look at him, we are to study him, we are to see how we should respond, and we are to be like him.

John says in his epistle of **1 John** *“As was he so are we in this world.”* **“We do not know what we'll be like but when we see him we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.”** God's goal is to conform us (**Romans 8**) **“into the image of Jesus Christ.”** If we see what Jesus is like, that's the person we are supposed to imitate. We are not to imitate our TV soap opera heroes, our sports heroes. We are not to look at them as role models. We are to look at Jesus Christ as the role model, as the ultimate role model, as the ultimate man. Everything that you want your children to be like you should see in Jesus Christ and you should point them to Him constantly because He is the only human being who walked worthy of who He was. He was the only one who walked in a worthy fashion His entire life without ever giving into sin. He was the only one who could only say **“I always do that which pleases my Father.”** He is the only one who could say, **“I didn't come to do my will but the will of Him who sent me.”** **“Which of you accuses me of sin?”** was one of His classic lines and nobody could say anything. He

didn't blow up with sinful anger, he didn't demean people, and he only lived in absolute perfection. He is the model of how we are to live. So Paul's admonition is you are to walk in a manner worthy of God by mimicking Christ. You are to live so that people learn who Jesus is by observation of you. That's the command.

1 John 4:8 says **"God is love."** So we are to live so that people understand that God is loving by the way that we live and by the way that we speak. The word mimic is an interesting term. It means to share commonly perceived characteristics or attributes. So what do you know about Jesus? He was compassionate - are you? He spoke truth regardless of cost - do you? What else do you know about Jesus? He always had time for the people who were genuinely seeking God - do you? He didn't look for people to boast his ego; he wasn't a man pleaser - are you? Walk as he walked because you are a child of God. The exhortation begins to get very practical. People say, *"How did Jesus live a life of love?"* It's obvious and I shouldn't have to spend a lot of time saying this to you but I'll just share a few thoughts.

John Stott wrote this quote about Jesus' life. **"A person's life is his most precious possession, consequently to rob him of it is the greatest sin you can commit against him, while to give one's life on another's behalf is the greatest possible expression of love. This then is the ultimate contrast. In Cain his hatred resulted in murder. Christ's love resulted in His self-sacrifice. Walk as Jesus walked."**

Is your life modeled by self-sacrifice? Is your life modeled by humility? **Philippians 2** **"Jesus humbled himself. He became a servant."** Is your life humbled? Is your life servant driven? Jesus was obedient even to the point of death. Are you driven by the same kind of passion of adherence to God's will and God's way for your life regardless of cost to you? Or are you driven by something else? He spoke and He lived for the glory of God. Is that true of you as well?



This is the bar that the Lord holds for his people and says, *"Live worthy. Live in a manner worthy of the call because you are God's children. Imitate your Father."*

The most sincerest form of flattery the world would say is to imitate the people that you admire and is there anybody more admirable, was there anybody more worthy than the Lord God Almighty? No. Is there anybody more worthy than Jesus Christ? No. An expression of our worship isn't just singing, it's the willingness to imitate the one we love. So what does that look like? Jesus expressed His love for us not in sentimentality in buying us candy and flowers. He expressed His love for us in being committed to doing whatever it took, regardless of the cost, so that we would come to know His Father, that we

would glory in His Father, that we would love His Father, that we would experience the benefit of being in relationship with His Father, regardless of cost to us or regardless of cost to himself. If you want to really get a grip on love, you look at **2 Corinthians 8: 1-8**. Paul admonishes the people there. He says, ***“I am writing to you so that you may prove whether your love is genuine.”*** So if you want a biblical definition of love don't go **1 Corinthians 13**, that's love's fruit. If you want a biblical definition of love go to **2 Corinthians 8:1-8** and write yourself a biblical definition of love from that. Then prove or test whether your life has that. Then you'll know if you are loving the way Jesus did.



Let's see the opposite of what this walk looks like. This is a selfish walk.

VERSES 3 & 4

“³But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.”

This is where it gets difficult. It's not difficult to understand. It's difficult because it is hard to swallow. It's difficult because the Lord is going to bring about very poignant aspects about our life and wants to deal with us about them. He is going to list 6 behaviors. We are going to look at the first 3 then group the last 3 together because the last 3 have to do with our tongue and what we say. The first 3 are very profound. I want to give you the biblical definition and I want to give you examples of it from the bible and then put a thought in your head. I'm trying to be very sensitive but my goal isn't to be controversial, my goal is to bring truth. My goal is to bring faithfulness to what God says here so I am saying this in love so bear with me.

1) SEXUAL IMMORTALITY

You have probably heard the Greek word before “porneia”. You get the word pornographic or pornography from it. What the bible is talking about here is it is mentioned 35 times in the New Testament. 35 times Paul uses this term. This is a huge problem for God’s people. It has always been a huge problem for God’s people and God wants his people to move past it. It’s not just saying pornography. “Are you saying back in the 1st Century Church they looked at naked women pictures?” No, that’s not what I am saying. That’s not what the text is saying. This word means fornication of any kind, a literal lack of sexual self-control. That’s what we are talking about here, OK? Fornication, sex outside of marriage, means a lack of self-control in a sexual arena.

I’m going to give you examples of that. Why is it that a society can say where a bunch of guys get together and drink in a dark room and look at naked 18 year old girls, why do they call that a “Gentlemen’s Club”? Because you smoke a cigar and that somehow brings credibility to it? Or the man that doesn’t do that, who goes home and takes care of his children and prays with his family and loves his family, and loves and serves the Lord, that guy is not a gentleman but some kind of deviate of society now? Is that what we’ve become?

“Porneia” is the same thing. It infiltrates that. It’s trying to put a clean-cut acceptable definition on something that God says is evil. For every young woman that a man lusts and drools over, that’s somebody’s daughter, who is heart-broken over his daughter. It’s not right and it shouldn’t be named among God’s people that they find that acceptable. The women are like, “*Amen, amen, you tell them!*”



Well listen ladies, what about romance novels? That's women's pornography. You're like, "*Oh, now you are touching my Harlequin romance books.*" Well, let me tell you, when you title books like "Loves Savage Fury", its women's pornography. The intent of it is to get a woman's twist on what sexuality should be. Those sales are up \$100 million even in a recession. This is the general premise. I don't read a lot of women's romance books, I don't read them at all, but I've done a lot of research on them from people who do. I ask them, "*What's the premise of the book?*" They say is usually goes like this: **"There's a guy who is a gad and he forces himself upon a woman who initially resists him but later on through her feminine wiles, she controls him so much so that he can't live without her and he loses all control and he has to have her and she becomes the object of his worship."** It's idolatry, its porneia.

It's the same as a man who looks at a naked woman and says, "*That woman wants me without any kind of commitment and I should have all the women I want.*" It's lacking sexual self-control. Paul says "***This should not be named among you. This should not be true of you. I shouldn't hear that you struggle with it. I should hear that you battle against it and hate it.***" It shouldn't be fitting to be named as something that we say, "*Well, we all struggle with things, so who care!*" You should fight against it. It is a lack of control in sexual things. Paul says that's what sexual immortality means.

2) UNCLEANNES/IMPURITY

It's interesting that Paul adds that to immortality to emphasize or amplify the depravity of the people in Ephesus or even more so the depravity of our own land. Let me give you an example of this: Paul says in **Romans 1:24-26**, he uses this term of the homosexual life style. He puts it out there and says this impurity, this uncleanness; this is dominated in that lifestyle. He says in Chapters 1-3 he talks about universal condemnation and universal depravity. He says what happens there is that people exchange the glory of God for that of themselves. So man won't glory God even though they know God, even though they know about God, they refuse to honor him as God neither were they thankful. They exchange the glory of God for that of animals and of themselves. One of the ways, not the only way, this instant universal switching of the glory of God for the passion of self takes place and is manifest, not the only way but one of the ways, is in the homosexual lifestyle. It becomes, I'm a guy, all of a sudden I exchange the glory of God for myself, I begin to be attracted to myself, and the ultimate expression is found in same sex relationships. That's what Paul says is the case. He says that God turns people over to that mindset when they exchange the glory of God for that of other things. Paul uses that word unclean here. So when you exchange the glory of God for an idol, which is yourself, it can be manifest in a lot of ways and you can be prone to fall in love with same sex relationships. The core of this, the heart of God's word here is that same sex attraction is a dysfunctional form of idolatry. It's not the only one but it is one. That's what the word of God says is true of that lifestyle.

The good news is that doesn't have to be true of us always for the rest of our life. No sin pattern has to be true of us for the rest of our life. Look what Paul says to the Corinthians in:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ⁹ *Or do you not know* (now again he is repeating what he said to the Ephesian church) *that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived* (he's bringing truth here. He's saying don't let people deceive you. Don't let somebody come who says they are a great teacher and deceive you by telling you something different) *neither the sexually immoral* (which we just talked about) *nor idolaters* (which immortality is), *nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,* ¹⁰ *nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God* (he says they won't) ¹¹ *And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."*

The bible emphatically teaches us change from any sin is possible. Any sin is possible. Such were some of you but now you're not. You were – now you're not. You may still have struggles with those sins but that should not be characteristic of who you are as a believer. You were – not you're still.

3) COVETOUSNESS

It's a greedy desire to have more. This is in the context of sexuality. Remember the first 2 had to do with sex. This isn't making a break and just saying "Now don't be coveting about things", it is still talking about the same thing. Do you not realize that pornography and things like that fuel a passion for more so that you are not satisfied? You are not satisfied with who you have. You are not satisfied with what God gave; you have a continuous desire to fuel it with more. Studies show that people who have been addicted to pornography, their homes have shipwrecked because they are not content with who God gave them. They fueled it with a fantasyland of twisting sexuality into something that is either gravitated towards a man's mindset or a woman's mindset because it pulls it away from what God has said on the topic: "One man, one woman, together to model Christ's love for the church." It's twisted by both sides. It's not pointing a finger at either; it's pointing a finger at both. It's come back to the truth of the reality of what God has made so that you won't give Satan a foothold so that you won't be lead astray by the deceitfulness of sin so that you won't become a coveter or an idolater. So coveting is simply that desire for more. It's what drives unclean behavior. It's a powerful, passionate, desire for what you don't have. It fuels discontentment and it fuels a hardened heart towards God.



I'll tell you in coveting, when I smashed my Blackberry the first thing that I did when I got back to town is I went to get a new phone. I didn't want people thinking, "*He didn't respond to my emails*", "*He doesn't respond to my text*" or "*He won't call me back*". Well my phone was bent in half, so what am I going to do? So I go to the store and the first thing the salesman does is bring out the most

fanciest thing and says, “*You got to have this iPhone 4*” and he shoves it in my face. I go, “*Well, I’ve got a problem with the bite out of the Apple, I don’t want it.*” He looked at me and I’m telling him about the Lord, “*Well you know the bible tells . . .*” He’s like, “*Oh my gosh, you’ve got to be kidding me.*” I said, “*It’s my own issue. If you plug the Apple bite maybe I’ll take it. What else do you have?*” So he brought out some other phones. He was always trying to up sale saying, “*This is the latest and greatest.*” And it’s fueling coveting, isn’t it? I said, “*You know what, I just want a phone that works. Do you got one that text and answers the phone? That’s all I want – email, phone, texting. I don’t care about music or anything else. I just want it to work.*” He said, “*Oh, you are so boring.*” I said, “*You are such a lousy salesman, can I talk to somebody else.*” So the point is that this coveting is fueled in everything we do. iPhone 3? It’s a waste of time. It works well you don’t need it anymore. You’ve got to wait in line for 2 hours to get the #4. Then when #5 comes out in a month or so, you’ve got to get rid of your #4 so you can have #5. Who wants an iPad #1 when you can have an iPad#2? Do you see what I am saying? It’s learning to be content with what God gave, not learning to be competing against the Joneses. If God wanted you to have an iPad#20 he’d give you an iPad#20 – be content with what God gave. Don’t succumb to coveting and don’t be a person who likes to flash stuff that you have to cause your brother to stumble into coveting. Keep your iPhone#10 to yourself. Don’t cause people to stumble.

4) FILTHINESS, SILLY TALK OR LEVITY

We are going to clump these together for time sake. It’s talking about speech. I’m going to treat it under two categories.

(A) Twisting everything to be rude or lewd

So what’s in the well of the heart comes up in the bucket of the mouth. That’s basically what the Lord is pointing in this passage. It’s treating things that are meant to be treated on face value and treating them to be something rude or sexual. You hear that all the time, don’t you? You know people like that who twist it into something wicked. That shouldn’t be named among us.

(B) Trivial

We shouldn’t treat things as trivial that are serious. That’s like making jokes about hell. God doesn’t say hell is a funny place. God doesn’t say, “You should laugh about people that go there.” It’s not funny. We shouldn’t trivialize it. We shouldn’t take things that are serious and holy and trivialize them and we shouldn’t take things that are meant at face-value and twist them into being something rude.

Profanity has been well said. R.C. Sproul says it’s the “weapon of the witless.” I call it the “ammo of the atheist”. You can call it the defense of the depraved. It’s a trigger mechanism for failing to come to reality and deal with truth. So out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks and if out of your

mouth only comes profanity, it's a good chance that the Lord doesn't bridle your mouth and doesn't control your mouth; he's not controlling your heart. So if you have a problem with language of always blowing up with a language that you shouldn't say or things that are less than edifying, that's not a mouth issue, that is a heart issue. Don't address the symptom, address the root. Say, "*Lord, you need to work on this heart because out of the abundance of my heart comes this profanity.*" The Lord says that shouldn't be named among us.

Back in Chapter 4 it told us to put off the old man and we are to put on the new man. Right here it is telling us that part of putting on that new man is not just to talk bad anymore; don't replace just one set of words with another. Look what he says. He says instead of talking like that, which are out of place, the behaviors, the immorality, the impurity, the coveting, the talking of making things rude that aren't rude, the talking of making things trivial that are serious – instead of doing those things – we are to put on one thing. If you think about it, it's a crazy antidote. He says you are to put on THANKSGIVING.

Now how many of you without raising your hands would just say, "*I was thinking about all these issues and I was talking to my brother and sister in Christ who said, 'I'm struggling with pornography, I'm struggling with coveting and I'm struggling with all kinds of profanity'*" and I would say to them, "*You know what, here's your issue – you need to put on thanksgiving.*" How many would say that to them? None of us because we would come to a humanistic way of dealing with it. We'd say, "*What you've got to do is take a hammer to your computer*" or "*What you've got to do is handcuff yourself to your wife*" or "*What you've got to do is all these things*" – in reality of saying, "*God's remedy is thanksgiving.*"

Philippians 4:4 "**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. In all things by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**" Thanksgiving is the pivot point for deliverance from coveting because a coveter is a person who isn't content or satisfied with what God has given. In other words at the heart of coveting is a person who says "*What God has said I am going to trivialize. I'm going to trivialize the promises of God and go out on my own and go after what I want. I don't believe God's promises that he is going to begin a good work and he's going to be faithful to complete it. I don't believe that God is going to be faithful. I don't believe that Psalm 37:4 is true that he is going to give me the desire of my heart. I don't believe what he said in Matthew 6:33 seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. I don't believe any of it. So I trivialize it and I go after it on my own.*" When you do that you fall right into Satan's snare which is what Paul is trying to get us to be delivered from.



The key is being thankful and being grateful. I'll share this with you, maybe you'll laugh. I went and had a colon cancer screening. Has anybody ever had one of those? It's not pleasant. I felt like one of those Macy's Day balloon floats. If you never had one, you don't know what I'm talking about. If you do, you're like "aaahh". We have a history on my father's side of colon cancer, so they said I should have a screening. So I go through this thing, its super unpleasant. I'm all bitter because this is embarrassing, I had stuff to do, I had an appointment, asking *"how long is this going to take, can we just get on with the thing and move on?"* So the guy said *"I don't see any problems, I don't see any cancer, good for you, you are fine."* I'm leaving kind of all irritated because of the things that happened that day and I had so much to do and I waited an hour just to get in and get the test and then the Lord really convicted me and said, *"Why aren't you thankful? Did that test cost you any money?"* I go, *"No"*. *"And didn't you get a good result?"* I go, *"Yes."* He goes, *"Why didn't you say thank you? Why weren't you grateful? Because I would have still been God even if it was negative but I spared you, which I should have or could have bought on you. For my own purposes I let you walk out OK and you're mad because you are 1 ½ hours behind on your schedule. What do you have that you didn't receive? All time is mine, your life is mine, your breath is mine, and you're mine. Why aren't you grateful?"* So I just stopped and cried on the side of the road. It's just one of those things where God just crushes you, to remind you *"and neither were you thankful."* I just want to share that with you because the reality is we as Christians, especially in this land, are the most selfish, self-seeking, self-centered group of people in the whole earth. We are not

content with what God gave, we are always unhappy instead of being the most joyful of all people. We have a savior who is the treasure in the field, we have a king of kings, we have the Lord God Almighty and he is the (whatever word you want to use) bomb of all people. He is the ultimate being and he belongs to us. We should be grateful. Not bitter, resentful and unhappy.

John Younts said **“To put on response at the end of verse 4 is Paul saying that gratitude should punctuate your speech, not swearing. The contrast is striking. He’s not saying replace one set of words for another. God wants your heart to be grateful. He wants your faithful, trusting heart. He wants your submissive, humble heart. When he has these things from you, swearing is never an issue. If your talk acknowledges that God have sovereign control over your life and that he is working all these together for your good, you will express gratitude not frustration or rebellion. As a man thinks so he is. Change the way you think.”**

William Ward said this: **“Discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past, a distaste for the present and a distrust of the future. It is in gratitude for the blessings of yesterday, indifference for the divine opportunities of today and insecurity regarding the strength for the promises of tomorrow. It is unawareness of the presence of beauty, unconcern for the needs of our lost fellow men and unbelief in the promises of our God. It is impatience with time, immaturity of thought, and impoliteness to our Father who is only ever been faithful.”**

That’s what we are talking about here. We need to have the word of God change us from the inside out. Change us from what we were to who we are and our behavior should line up with who we are, not who we use to be.

VERSES 5 & 6

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.”

He’s talking again about something we are to know. I want to bring a truth here that’s not often taught. There’s a wide-held view that Jesus Christ paid the penalty of every single person’s sin and the only sin that is left is the sin of rejecting Christ. That’s not what the bible teaches at all. What the bible teaches is that you are either completely forgiven of all of your sin or you are not forgiven of any of your sin. If you look very closely its says, **“let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things** (these behaviors, these attitudes, these words, this corrupted heart) **the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”**

Paul said the exact same thing in **Colossians 3:5-6: ⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming.”**

So I want you to see that it's not what modern people teach as popular is true. What's true is what God's word says. God's word says you are either forgiven of your sin or you are dead in it. You are not forgiven of most of it. You're either forgiven of all of it in Christ, or you are forgiven of none of it. If you are forgiven of none of it, then you will pay the penalty of your own sin or in Christ he will pay the penalty of your sin. It's not a delusion or dilution of the two mixed together. It's clear-cut, there's no gray. You are either saint or ain't, forgiven or not. You are either on your way to glory, or on the way to hell. There is no other ground. Paul's attitude here is that you have to see truth and it's because of the sins of people mounting up that the wrath of God is coming. Such were some of us. If we see that as truth, and we begin to experience the gratitude of being forgiven of all of my sin that will fuel itself into the way I speak. It will fuel itself into the way I covet or don't. It will fuel itself into the way I pursue God's passionate life or I pursue the world's twisted version of lust. It's as simple as that.

I want you to see that what this is really teaching us is that sexual sin, lewd and rude talk, and coveting is man's, the world's, the flesh, the devil's way of dethroning God. God is supposed to be the center of our life. When Christ, who is your life of years, he is to be our life. We are to have him encapsulated in every area of our life. He is to be the reason why we get out of bed, he is to be the reason why we walk with him, he is to be the reason that motivates my speech and fuels the things that I do. That's a Christian. When that is twisted or when he is put off there because we are discontent with what he gave or we think he's holding back from us, we enthrone ourselves and we enthrone our passions, and we enthrone our will. So all these things are designed by the devil to usurp God's authority, which is always Satan's ploy. ***"Did the Lord really say?"*** It's to push him off the throne. Gratitude, thankfulness, humility, keeps God's central on the throne in our life. Everything God speak to is to help us keep him central in our life.

I'll give you an example:

Giving isn't just something people should do. Giving is something where God provides an opportunity for us to battle against our greed. Look at it like that. God is saying, *"You want to put some feet on your faith, here's an opportunity to fight against your greed, to fight against your covetousness, to fight against your distrust of God of 'I won't have enough.'*" Opportunity – put faith to practice. God provides that opportunity in every area of our life. He's always calling us to trust him, he's always calling us. It happens with, if you are a lady here and you are single and you're like, *"God is never going to give me a spouse."* You know what, if you desire to be married, that's not a desire in the world anymore. Only in Harlequin romance novels. But if you desire to be married biblically, God will give you the desire of your heart and provide you a spouse. Don't distrust him; don't say he is taking too long. Maybe God is preparing you to be the kind of wife that someone would want. Any maybe God is preparing a husband to be the kind of husband you would want. Don't distrust him and say, *"It's never going to happen for me. I'm going to find my own. We'll he's not a believer but maybe I can convert him."* You are violating so many commandments it's not going to work for you. Learn to be thankful that God is going to provide him for you. He will give you the desire of your heart because he has promised that he will. His reputation is on the line, not yours.

So what am I supposed to do when I see these kinds of behaviors?

VERSE 7

“Therefore do not become partners with them.”

The Lord doesn't say not to associate or to have anything to do with the people. He's not saying, "Nor the people". He's saying you got to distance yourself and not be in partnership with the behaviors. Should I have unsaved friends? If you are bringing them to Christ, yes. If they are bringing you somewhere else, no. It's as simple as that. We need to see what the bible is clear on is every relationship we have is evangelistic in nature. The world is trying to convert us; we're trying to convert them. Which is the better evangelist? If you're the better evangelist in that relationship and they're coming to the Lord and you see progress, you know what, good for you. But if you're saying, *"Every time I hang out with them I start falling into the same old bad behaviors and I'm starting to go backwards"*, well bad company corrupts good character, drop it. Shake the dirt off your shoes, move on. Because the Lord has purpose in your life for his kingdom and God says, *"If this relationship is producing bad fruit, cut it off."* You have a friend who sticks closer than a brother, you have a friend who loves you and gave himself for you. You don't need a friend who is going to pull you from your best friend. You need a friend is going to highlight your best friend. You need a friend that wants to know your best friend. Anything other than that didn't come from the Lord, it came from somewhere else.

So if you say, *"My whole intent is just to win them all so I went out and got drunk with my buddies."* It's not a good witness and it doesn't show them the difference that Jesus makes. It doesn't show them the satisfaction that you have in the Lord so that you don't need to drown out your problems in liquor. It shows you that you trust in the same things that they do. So the gospel has just been gutted of its changing power. It doesn't do us any good to say the gospel in the power of the word of God, in Jesus Christ by his spirit can change your life, if we act, trust like, sound like, behave like, speak like, everybody else. It shows a hypocritical witness. God says those things shouldn't be named among you.

Back to verse 3 & 4. It says, what does Paul say that's going to help us eliminate fornication, covetousness, lewd talking, what does he tell us to do? Does he come along and say, *"You know what, if you ever read Exodus, God says 'Thou shalt not covet'"* then he whacks them upside the head with the bible. This is what people think you should do. Paul doesn't say that. This is what is so great about the Lord, follow very closely, this is what he does say.

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. So two times in these two verses Paul uses the term fitting or proper. Act as you are, not as you were because the things that use to be true of you, and such were some of you, they no longer fit with who you are now.

So back to my phone. I had a Blackberry. I loved it. It was old school, it was a classic. It wasn't good after it got slammed in my trunk and was bent in half and didn't work anymore. But it had all these accessories. I had these 3 backup batteries for it and all this stuff. I was all prepared. What happened when I lost my phone and broke it? Do I keep my batteries just on the odd chance that one day they

will come in useful? Do I keep my old life and habits just in the fact that one day they may become useful to me? Or do I say, *"You know what, this has to do with the old phone, it's gone. I chucked it. It didn't fit anymore. It doesn't fit my new phone. It's useless to me."*

Paul's point here is that the things that are proper, the word means to fit. What fits with who you are now? Who is it that you are really? The key to everything is knowing who you are in Jesus Christ. It's taking what God says and let God be true and everybody else a liar. So when God says, ***"If any man be in Christ is a new creation, the old is passed away, behold all things become new, and such were some of you, and I began a good work and I will be faithful to complete it"*** that's what he means. It means he is not going to forsake you, he's not going to abandon you, and he's going to keep molding you. You go, *"I don't like the process."* Well, you're the clay. He's the potter, you're the clay, get over it. He is going to mold you into the image of His Son. End of story, period. That's it. Or you can believe the world, the flesh, and the devil that says, *"No, this is who you always going to be. This is true of you."* Satan comes along and lies and say, *"You're still blank"*. God says, *"No, you're this."* Now your choice is who are you going to believe? If the Lord is the Lord, then follow him. If the Lord is the Lord, then believe him. If God said this, who cares what the world says, who cares what your friend's say, who cares what you think. *"This will never be true of me."* Get over yourself. This is true of you because God said it is true of you. He calls you a saint, he calls you a holy one, and he calls you his own. He says he will complete what he began. End of story. So you are a new creation, even if you are not behaving like it. So the key is to behave who you really are like. The old things, the old wineskin doesn't go into the new wineskin. The old you doesn't fit with who you are now. Throw away your batteries – let it go. Let all those things that use to be true of you, just let them fall away by the wayside. They don't fit with who you are now.



VERSE 8

“For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord”. Be what you are. Now light here is used in a symbolic way just in the same way as darkness was. Remember from Chapter 4 darkness was referring to ignorance and evil. It was characteristic of somebody who was lost. Right here he’s talking about somebody who was saved. He’s light here in an intellectual way and he’s using it in a moral way. So light intellectually refers to truth, the real truth. Not just 2+2=4 truth but deep spiritual truth. Light morally just refers to holy living. So the exhortation here is to live in truth and holiness because that’s who you are. Now look very closely at the text. It doesn’t say you were in darkness, he said you once were darkness. That’s a big distinction. The note is not in darkness but you were darkness. He says that was true of you. You weren’t just a victim of a satanic system; you were a contributor to his system. You were once darkness. He doesn’t say but now you are in light, he says now you are light. Do you see the difference? You once were controlled by Satan, now you should be controlled by the Lord. You are controlled by the Lord. This is true of you if you are a believer.

I’ll put it like this: I use to be dead in my trespasses and sins but now I am light positive infected. You are as a Christian light in the Lord. Therefore since that is a truth, let that manifest because that is being more normal than anything else. The most normal thing a Christian can do is be light because that’s what they are. The most abnormal thing a Christian can do is let the old man dominate and rule his life because that’s who he’s not. So when Paul is saying, *“Don’t let these things be mentioned among you”* he’s not saying *“I’ll clean your act up.”* He’s saying, *“The Lord has given you everything you need for life and godliness, let those things manifest in you. It is the Lord working in you, it’s the Lord who will glorify himself, it is the Lord who will be seen.”* Our belief of the flesh in the devil and the lies that they sold to us cause us not to respond in faithfulness and to trust him.

There are 3 truths taught by this passage here.

- 1) You were once empowered by Satan (John 8:44)** Jesus is talking to the Pharisees and says, *“You do what you do because you are of your father, the devil.”* So that’s what we once were.
- 2) We were once ruled by Satan (2 Timothy 2:25-26)** It says that you should seek God to perhaps grant repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth so that people would escape from the snare of the devil having been taken captive by him to do his will.
- 3) We were once owned by Satan.** In that condition from verse 6 of our text we were once under God’s wrath. *“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”*

Those are truths, hard truths but they are true. Now here’s the evangelistic call Paul puts in here.

VERSES 9-14

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."

So the fruit of light is this. A Christian is light; this is what's true of our life. This is what God has put in there already: Goodness, righteousness and truth. Where it says "try to discern", dokimaz is the Greek word, it doesn't mean try to figure it out. That word just means to prove genuine or to be tested. So this is saying as a person, as a Christian who walks in light, a person who lets the light of God manifest in their life, that proves that they please the Lord. A believer pleases the Lord because Jesus pleased the Lord for the believer. Jesus manifest himself in the lives of his people and that pleases the Lord.

So where it says "don't participate in evil" it means to not partnership with it. Where it says "expose it" it doesn't mean you go around pointing with your finger and showing everybody their fault. It means to reprove or to convince that actions are sinful. It means that our life should be light so that it proves and convinces the people around us that their lives are sinful. It doesn't mean you are accusatory, it means let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven. So it's not finger pointing, it's living so that light is seen and it's living so that people see their sin.

A person can't turn from a behavior that's sinful and ask the Lord to save them if they don't see that their behavior is sinful. Live in such a way that your life is light because you are light in the Lord.

Therefore it says, "**Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.**" Most commentators believe this line is a line from an Easter's hymn that was song by the First Church. It comes from Isaiah but they believe that the early church sang it. But I see it very evangelistically. I see it as an opportunity to wake up those sleepers. I love the symbolism in it.

Many of you guys who are young don't know who Rip Van Winkle is, do you? I talked to somebody who was 20 something this morning before service and he said "I never heard of him. Does he make hot sauce?" I go, "No, come on man. It's from Washington Irving's famous book." He goes, "Who's he?" I go, "Uggh, you play Nintendo, don't you?" He goes, "Well, I do." I said, "You need to read." The point of his story is there's a guy named Rip Van Winkle and his wife was nagging him so he went up to the mountains and drank some liquor and fell asleep for 20 years. So it's every man's quote "fantasy". He falls asleep, he wakes up, goes back to town, his wife is dead, everybody is changed. The point is it's a guy who participated in the things of the world to deliver him from reality into a fantasy world so that he woke up and it was too late. The story of Rip Van Winkle is very poignant for a Christian and especially for someone who is not.

Don't be a Rip Van Winkle during the age of grace. Don't waste and sleep through this time of grace, participating, walking in, loving in darkness because one day it will be too late for you. If

you are here today and you don't know Jesus Christ, don't hit the snooze button on what I am telling you.

"AWAKE OH SLEEPER, RISE FROM THE DEAD AND CHRIST WILL SHINE ON YOU."

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you so much for this opportunity to be in your house this morning and even more so Lord, thank you for your word. I recognize it's a difficult saying, I know it's hard but I thank you Lord that you are able to administer it to your people in such a way that it is comforting. I pray Lord for any here who might not know you. Your Son said "I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, I'm just going to ask, "Is there anybody here today or how many of you today would say "My life has been characterized by darkness. I look at my life and don't see goodness and righteousness and truth. I don't see Jesus Christ alive in my life. I've never known God intellectually. I guess I understand these things but I've always sought my own way." And so the invitation to the people of Ephesus is the same invitation to you: Wake up, rise, and the Lord will give you life. So how many of you would say "I never received Jesus Christ as my Savior, but today I feel I would like to. I would like to turn from my own way and turn to his way." If that is the desire of your heart, just look up at me or raise your hand. I want to pray with you and pray for you. I won't embarrass you. God bless you. Anybody else? God bless you. Anybody else? Alright, let's pray together and pray along with me. Father I thank you that you sent us a Savior. I thank you that his name is Jesus. I turn from my own way of living. My life has been characterized by immorality, impurity, coveting, and bad-mouth. I want you to change my heart so that out of the abundance of my heart flows thankfulness. So would you receive me? Would you forgive me and would you make me your own. I thank you that I'm passing from death to life now help me to walk with you all the days of my life. I commit myself to you and to your way. In Jesus most beautiful name. Amen.