

PM Ephesians 5:8-14

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Date: 22 March 2020

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[0 : 00] Well friends, as you can probably tell, we've switched venue this evening. We're back in the church. I thought I'd try this to see if it felt any more natural, any less staged for us.

I felt this morning a little bit awkward, a little bit staged. So we've come back to the church to see if that helps us, to see if that brings back those familiar feelings to us. What are we going to do this evening? Well, we're going to do the same thing that we saw this morning, the same thing we did this morning.

And we're going to read God's word together. We're going to pray and then we're going to see what God's word says to us. We're going to think about what the Bible says to us. We've come in our studies in Ephesians to Ephesians chapter 5.

And today we're thinking about verses 8 through 14, this little section, verses 8 through 14. But as we come to it now, we're going to read from Ephesians 5 and verses 1 through 14. It's going to show us the context in which we find Ephesians 5 and verses 8 through 14.

Ephesians 5 and beginning to read at verse 1. 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.

[1 : 12] But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among the saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking which are out of place.

But instead let there be thanksgiving. 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.

Let no one deceive you with empty words. For because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them.

For at one time you were darkness. But now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible.

[2 : 13] For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you. Amen.

Let us turn to the Lord in prayer. Let us pray. Heavenly Father we thank you this evening for your word. We thank you that it still speaks to us. We thank you Father that the Holy Spirit testifies to our spirit with your word.

We thank you Father for that assurance that we are one in Christ. That we are one fellowship. We may not be able to gather physically. We may not be able to gather together. But we thank you that we are one in your Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that you would bind us together in that unity. Bind us together in that love. Bind us together in that fellowship. We pray Father that you would go before us.

As we come to your word. We pray that you would be with all of our friends and family who are struggling at this time. Those who are struggling with illness. Those who are struggling perhaps with fear and anxiety.

[3 : 17] May they cast all their cares upon you. And know that you care for them. Remember all the NHS staff who are treating those who are sick at the moment. Pray that you would continue to grant them safety.

Pray that you would continue to grant them good health in the midst of all this illness. And we pray Father that you would draw near to us as a nation. That you would keep your hand upon us we ask. In Jesus name. Amen. So let's turn then in our Bibles please to this section. Ephesians 5.

Ephesians 5 and verses 8 through 14.

Ephesians 5 and verses 8 through 14. What are you afraid of this evening? Most of you probably aren't afraid of too much.

It has to be said. Some of you may not like spiders, snakes. I have to confess that I'm okay with spiders and snakes. They don't really bother me that much. I'm not a big fan of rats and mice.

[4 : 15] Those sort of things I'm not keen on. But the one thing that absolutely terrifies me. The one thing that I'm absolutely frightened of. Is the dark. I don't know why.

But it terrifies me. I hate the dark. I hate being alone in a dark room. I hate being alone and coming into a dark church. Because you can't see what's going on. At the back of your mind there's always that fear.

Well what was that little noise? What was that sound that I didn't know? You can't see. And so you become fearful.

I had to sleep with the light on in my bedroom. Until I was about 20, 21. Such was my fear of the dark. And as we come to Ephesians 5 this evening. As we come to these verses 8 through 14. It's all about light and dark isn't it? It's all about children of light. And children of darkness. It's all about those who live in the light. And those who live in the dark. Paul encourages the Ephesian believers here in this section.

[5 : 16] To live as children of the light. Because that's what they are. They are children of light in Christ. Rather than live as children of the dark. And notice he says that that's what they once were.

Live as children of light. Not as children of dark. We want to say three things together this evening. Three things from this passage in Ephesians chapter 5. Firstly, we want to think about the children of light.

What it means to be a child of the light. Secondly, we want to think about the children of darkness. What it is characterizes them. What it is shapes their life and their world view.

And then thirdly, we want to see the light of Christ. Because it's the light of Christ that makes the difference between the children of light and the children of dark. It's the light of Christ that makes the difference between the saved and the unsaved.

Those three things. Children of light. Children of the darkness. And the light of Christ. So first of them, we see the children of light. The children of light. And we see that in verses 8 through 10.

[6 : 17] So remember last week, we finished by thinking about the differences that Paul draws. The contrast that Paul draws between the believers and the unbelievers. We thought about the instruction Paul gives to the believers in verse 2.

To live, to walk in love as Christ loved us. They're to walk in love following the example of their Savior, Jesus Christ. We saw the contrast with that in verse 4.

Of how the unbeliever lives. Paul says, well don't let there be any coarse joking. Don't let there be any foolish talk amongst you. Rather, walk in love. As Christ loved us.

We finish by looking at verse 7. How Paul instructs the church in Ephesus then to have no partnership with them. Therefore, verse 7, do not become partners with them.

It seemed like a bit of an odd place to finish a sermon. It seemed like a bit of an odd place to finish a section right in the middle of a sentence. But in a sense, as we come to verse 8 tonight, it helps us see why Paul speaks the way that he does.

[7 : 20] It helps us see why Paul instructs them not to have any fellowship. Not to have any partnership with those who are outside of Christ. Why?

Because according to verse 8, at one time you were in darkness. But now you're light in the Lord. That's why they're not to have any partnership with them.

That's why they're not to join with them. Because that's how they used to live. That was how they used to be. They used to be darkness. But now they're light in the Lord.

And notice the way that Paul phrases that in verse 8. For at one time you were darkness. I always ask myself, well if I was writing this, what would I say?

If I was writing this, how would I put it? I would probably say that at one time you lived in darkness. That at one time perhaps you walked in darkness.

[8 : 19] But Paul doesn't say that here, does he? Rather he says, no. At one time, verse 8, you were darkness. Darkness was their defining trait.

Darkness was the thing that they were known for. But notice please that that's also the same of those who now are in the light. They're not in the light. They're not walking in the light. But they are, verse 8, light. They are light in the Lord. And it's a reminder to us of the fundamental change that takes place in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's why the gospel is so much more than just moral improvement. That's why the gospel is so much more than just try harder to be a good person. Try harder to live a little better life. Because the truth is, before Christ we were darkness. But now in Christ, now if we have faith in Christ this evening as Jesus, as our saviour, we are light.

[9 : 24] We've been taken off the broad road that leads to destruction and placed on the narrow path that leads to life. We've been taken from darkness into light. The light of the gospel lives in each one of us.

The gospel is so much more than just a moral improvement. The gospel is so much more than just try harder, do better. The gospel is a fundamental change in life.

The gospel is a fundamental change in our standing. I love Paul. I love the logic of his arguments though. Because what does he say?

He says, well look, you were once in darkness, verse 8, but now you're light in the Lord. He tells the Ephesian Christians that this objective change that's taken place. He tells them what's changed in their life.

But he doesn't just leave it there, does he? He doesn't allow them to just mop their bra and say, phew, glad we aren't darkness anymore. I'm so glad that I'm light in the Lord. No, rather then comes the imperative.

[10 : 25] At one time you were darkness, verse 8, but now you're light. What does that mean then? Well, verse 8, walk as children of the light.

Because of this fundamental objective change that's taken place. Paul says, go and live out the reality. Go and live out the implications of that.

It was said of the great Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt that he was so distrustful of the food of the 2008 Beijing Olympics that he survived entirely on a diet at McDonald's chicken nuggets. He had over, allegedly, over a thousand in ten days. Now that's not the diet of an Olympic champion, is it? Unless it's an Olympic weightlifter, of course. Bolt could sustain that diet for a short time, but not for a long time.

In order to be the best sprinter in the world, he had to eat like it. In order to be the best sprinter in the world, he had to train and live like a sprinter. And that's what Paul says to the Ephesian Christians here.

[11 : 28] You are children of the light in the Lord. Therefore, live like it. Live like it.

That's the great counterbalance of what I said just a few moments ago, isn't it? That the gospel isn't just moral improvement. That the gospel isn't just try a little bit harder, obey a few more rules and everything will be fine.

But the gospel does come with some moral imperatives. The gospel does demand some changes of us. The gospel demands that we live, as Paul says here, that we live as children of the light. The question then becomes for us, maybe, well, how do we live as children of the light? How do we live lives that show that we're children of the light? And then we get some of the answers from the preceding section that we thought about last week.

Paul has told them what's to be absent from among the church. We see that in verses 3 through 5 of chapter 5. In a sense, if we avoid these things, then we're living as children of the light.

[12 : 34] If we avoid these things, then we are living out our Christian commitment. Another passage that might help us understand is Galatians 5, where Paul tells us about the fruit of the Spirit.

He assures us that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. And that's how we live as children of the light.

We grow more and more in those graces. We grow more and more in those gifts. We become children of the light as we become more and more like the light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Which leads us to the question this evening, well, what way are you living? Are you light or darkness?

Are you in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you have a saving, personal, living faith in Him? Or are you outside of Him? For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and true and right, verse 9.

[13:44] That's what living in the light looks like. It looks like all that is good and right and true. It's discerning, verse 10, what is pleasing to the Lord.

What a comfort for us it is to know tonight that if we're in Jesus Christ, then we are light. But we also need to remember the words of Jesus Christ when He assured us that a light set on a hill cannot be hidden.

If we are light, then we must let that light shine. If we are light, then we must let that light go out to others. It should be plainly obvious to everyone around us that we are light.

It should be plainly obvious to everyone around us that we are in Christ. Those in darkness should see the light in us. In the way that we care for them. In the way that we serve them.

In the way that we conduct ourselves. In the way that we carry ourselves as we go day to day. It should become obvious to them that we're not the same as them. That we don't have the same values.

[14:47] That we don't have the same principles that they do. It's a comfort to know that we're light in Christ. But it's also a challenge. Because are we letting that light shine before others?

Do those who we work with know that we are light? Do those who we play sport with, who we go for coffee with, do they know that we are light? Are we living as children of the light more and more? So that's the first thing Paul reminds the Ephesians of then. That they are light in the Lord. Secondly then, we want to see how Paul reminds them about the children of darkness.

And we see that in verses 11 and 12. Verses 11 and 12. So having outlined their condition. Having assured the Ephesian believers that they are light in the Lord.

He now shows them the flip side of that coin. He now shows them the opposite of that, if you like. We see that in verse 11. Where Paul tells them, Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness.

[15:52] It's a lovely little expression, isn't it? It's a lovely little idea. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness. You see, what does darkness bring? It brings death.

Destruction. Decay. If you've ever put a pot plant inside a cupboard and left the door shut, you'll know what darkness brings. There's no fruit.

There's no profit. There's no gain from darkness. Only death. But maybe again, then, that leads us to the question, Well, what are the unfruitful works of darkness?

What might that look like for us today? And again, we go back to what we read at the start of Ephesians 5. The works of darkness are, verse 3, sexual immorality, impurity.

The works of darkness are covetousness. The works of darkness are filthiness, foolish talk. Verse 4, crude joking. It looks like the works of the flesh that we see in Galatians 5, as we think about the counterbalance to the fruit of the Spirit.

[16:59] Paul tells the church in Ephesus here in verse 10, in verse 11, sorry, to take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness. Take nothing to do with it. Have no part. Have no share in it whatsoever.

However. But then paradoxically almost, he says to them, take no part in it, verse 10, verse 11, yes. But instead, expose them.

Now, how is the church in Ephesus to expose something if it's to take no part in it? How can we bring something into the light if we don't have anything to do with it?

I think we need to understand what Paul's getting at here. When Paul tells the Ephesians to have nothing to do with it, to take no part in it. He doesn't mean for them to be unaware of it.

He doesn't mean for them to not know about it. But rather that the Ephesians as Christians should know that this thing is happening. They should be aware that it's going on, but they mustn't participate in it.

[18:00] They must know that it's happening, but they must have nothing to do with it. I'm reading a book at the moment about the political scandal in Northern Ireland. It was a heating scheme which effectively incentivized running boilers all day long to make more and more and more money.

All the farmers knew about it. All the businesses in Northern Ireland knew about the scheme. And they knew how to play it. One of the big supermarkets was invited if they would like to buy these boilers.

And to their credit, they said, no. We don't want to play the scheme. We don't want to make money out of it. We want to do it right. They knew what was going on, but they wanted no part of it.

They knew how to make money out of it, but they wanted no part of it. And that's what Paul is calling the Ephesian church here to in verse 11. That they're to take no part in these dark works. That they're to have nothing to do with them, but instead they're to expose them. They're to be aware that they're going on. They're to know about these dark works, but they're to have nothing to do with them.

[19 : 09] It's a reminder, isn't it, that where the gospel goes, where Christians go, it invariably brings light. Or at least it should bring light.

Remember those final words of Jesus to his disciples, to that final command that he gave them to go into all the world and make disciples of every nation. As we fulfill that commission, as we go into the town of Dumfries around us, as the gospel goes forward, it brings light to the nations. It brings illumination to those in darkness. What we're called to as Christians is not to a monastic lifestyle that we huddle together, that we're untouched by the town around us, that we're untouched by the darkness of the town around us.

That no outsider ever comes into our walls. What we're called to go. And as we go, we expose the works of darkness.

As we go, we bring the light of Christ that lives in us with us. We bring light to the darkness. It maybe causes us to ask the question this evening, well, where am I intentionally bringing light tonight?

[20 : 29] What relationships do I have? What are my points of contact with those people who are in darkness? It's easy to live. It's easy to live a comfortable Christian life.

It's easy to live a life that's in a Christian bubble that no one ever touches. It's easy to get bunkered down in little silos and where we just keep our community.

But the darkness won't dispel itself. Only the light of the gospel dispels the darkness. And how will they hear unless someone preaches to them?

How will we preach unless we go into the darkness and make the light known? Notice Paul doesn't sugarcoat things here. He doesn't say to them, well, the world isn't that bad.

The things aren't that bad. That you can go out and you can live a comfortable life in the world. Rather, no, he says, what? Verse 12. It is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.

[21 : 39] The things that they do would embarrass them. The things that they do would cause them to blush. But it's only as they hear of Christ. It's only as the gospel light goes out.

They realize these things are shameful. We see that with our own conversions, don't we? The things that we used to think were acceptable before we came to Christ. The things that we used to engage in before we came to Christ.

We thought were fine. And yet when we come to Christ. We see how shameful our deeds actually were. We see how wicked our hearts actually are.

We thought about the children of light. We thought about the children of darkness. And then finally, thirdly, we see the light of Christ. And we see that in verses 13 and 14. And so that's where Paul left the section in verse 12.

But Paul left it by saying that the things that they do are shameful. I think we could always feel that we're let off the hook. We could say, well, these things are shameful. These things shouldn't even be discussed. These things shouldn't even be talked about.

[22 : 45] And therefore, we won't talk about them. Yet it isn't where Paul leaves it. Instead, he says, verse 12, these things are shameful. Yes. These things are done in secret.

Yes. These things cause embarrassment. Yes. But, verse 13. When anything becomes exposed to the light, it becomes visible.

When anything becomes exposed to the gospel, when anything becomes exposed to the good news of Jesus Christ, it becomes visible. Similar idea, in a sense, to what we see in John's gospel. John chapter 3 reminds us that men love the darkness. Why? Because their deeds were evil. Men love the darkness because of the shamefulness of the things that they do.

When people go out robbing, they go out robbing in the darkness. Generally, when men and women get drunk, generally they get drunk in the darkness. Because the darkness gives them that cover.

[23 : 47] The darkness gives them that sense of hiding. And yet, John continues, the light has come into the world. The light has come into the darkness.

The light shines in the darkness. And the darkness has not overcome it. How will things be exposed to the light?

How will anything be exposed to the light? In verse 13.

Things are exposed to the light as Christians confront the world around them. As Christians confront the darkness of the world around them. As they show friends that they think differently. As they show friends that they act differently.

As they show friends that they have a different set of values and standards. As they prioritize different things. That's the light shining into the darkness. That's the light showing the darkness.

[24 : 49] The evilness of its deeds. The light shines as Jesus Christ is proclaimed and preached. The light shines as the freedom of the gospel goes forward. Therefore it says, verse 14.

There's no explicit reference to any Bible passage. There's certainly allusions to Isaiah. Perhaps a conflation. Sorry.

Of two passages in Isaiah. Isaiah 26 and Isaiah 60. It doesn't fit either of them. But carries ideas of both of them. What does it say? Awake, O sleeper.

Rise from the dead. And Christ will shine on you. Those who dwell in the darkness are those who are dead in sins and trespasses.

Those who dwell in the darkness are those who are dead. But how will they come to life? How will they be brought to life? As the Holy Spirit applies the truth of the gospel.

[25 : 49] As the Holy Spirit shines on them. And brings them to know Christ. Because you see, that's the key thing in this passage.

That's the key thing in this section, isn't it? What is it that makes the Ephesians those in light rather than darkness? It's the fact that the light of Christ has shone on them and shines through them.

It isn't that they were better than the world around them. It isn't that they were better sinners than those around them. It wasn't that they had pulled themselves up with their spiritual bootstraps.

No. It was the fact that the light of Christ had shone in them and shone through them. What is it that means that you're in light rather than darkness this evening?

What's the fact that the light of Christ has shone on you and has seen through you? What is it that makes the difference?

[26 : 51] It's that personal, living, active faith in Jesus Christ. We're going to finish tonight with one final thought. Remember that scene in John 8.

Jesus has just gone to the Feast of Booths. That great Feast of Lights has just taken place in Jerusalem. And Jesus stands up. And what does he say, John 8? I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Light and darkness.

What is it that makes the difference whether you're in the light or in the darkness? It's whether you follow Jesus Christ or not. There are two options tonight. You see, either we follow Christ and walk in the light of life.

Or we walk in darkness. But which is it to be for you tonight, friend? Which is it that you will do this evening? Which path are you walking tonight? The path of light?

[27 : 57] Or the path of darkness? Either way or not. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Praloma So, let's go.

So, let's go.