

Eph 5.3-7 Out of Darkness into Light

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[0 : 00] We're currently working through Ephesians chapter 5. Our focus this morning will be particularly verses 3 to 7, but we'll read 5 verses 1 to 21.

Before we read it, what is an idolater? Is an idolater somebody who fashions or carves a little figure or a little man that they put on the shelf that's supposed to be some sort of cosmic deity for worship?

Or is there more to what an idolater is? Is there something more to idolatry? Let's bear that in mind as we read. We're going to read 5 verses 1 to 21.

Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints, neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

[1 : 20] For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater has any 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 be partakers with them.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord, walking as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore, he says, awake you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.

[2 : 23] See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Lord, again, we thank you for this day, for this Lord's Day. Thank you for the means of grace, and thank you for your word. We pray, Lord, that as we hear your word, I pray that indeed you would speak to us, that you would attend this preaching by your Spirit and make your word effectual to all the hearers.

I pray, Lord, that you would use even me for your glory. I pray that you would illuminate your word to us. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, our text, our focus this morning will be verses 3 to 7.

And what this passage, what this text is saying, is that believers are to be at variance with the world and not walk in its ways of darkness. So we'll draw out from that text the world's ways, the world's end, and the believer at variance.

[3 : 52] The world's ways, the world's end, and the believer at variance. So first of all, the world's ways. The world's ways of carnal indulgence live in darkness, in deed, in thought, and in speech.

Now, our text in verse 3 gives us three vices. It says fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness. And then it repeats it again in five, as those who practice such things.

So let's unpack that. First of all, fornication from the word *porneia*, which means unsanctioned sexuality, sexual immorality, and unchastity.

And second is listed uncleanness, which is impurity, immodesty, and licentiousness, and would include impure novels and movies and every unnatural lust.

And then third is listed covetousness, which means avarice, greediness, discontentment, and moderate desire. And in this context, in our text this morning, it is most likely here applied to an inordinate sexual indulgence.

[5 : 00] Discontented, greedy, insatiability for a good thing from God, but taken out of God's order. Now, in addition to carnal deeds and thoughts that we see listed in verse 3, in verse 4, it gives us carnality of speech.

And the words that are there, they encompass obscenity of discourse, filthy communication, foolishness, vain speech, coarse jesting, crude joking, and indecent wit.

And such things are outside of the preceptive will of God, and not for our own, nor for our neighbor's edification, nor do they impart grace to the hearer, and they're not aimed at the glory of God.

Such carnals and habits are not in step with the walk-worthy orientation of the new creation, walking in love. So you probably by now have a pretty firm grasp on Ephesians being divided in half.

The first half, chapters 1 to 3, being theoretical, and the second half, chapters 4 to 6, being practical. Ephesians is both theoretical and practical, both what you ought to believe and what you ought to do, both faith and conduct.

[6 : 20] So as the Apostle Paul makes the transition from the theoretical to the practical, in verse 4, he makes a transition by stating, you notice he says, I beseech you to walk worthy.

So walk worthy, when we think of walk, that ought to recall to mind in chapter 2, what it speaks about the old nature, or the old man, or the sinful nature of man.

In verse 2, notice this, and he's talking the context of that you may know the exceeding greatness of the almighty power of God. He then goes on to say, So we're seeing a contrast here in the walk.

The walking according to the contrast of the world, of the old nature, and then the new creation orientation of walking worthy. So in chapter 4, it starts off by saying walk worthy, and then in 17, it picks it up again, and it says, No longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk.

And then that new walk, that new creation walk, or that new creation orientation, is a restoration of the likeness of God. And in 17, sorry, in 24, it says in that you put on the new man, which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness.

[7 : 41] So that new creation walk, that reoriented walk, is being restored in the likeness of God. And then in chapter 5, we see walk listed three times.

In chapter 2, to walk worthy is to walk in love. And then in chapter 8, or sorry, in verse 8, is to walk in light. And then in verse 15, is to walk in wisdom.

So we're currently in walking worthy and walk in love. Now, verse 5, it repeats those vices again. And verse 5 tells us that the covetous person is an idolater. So what exactly is an idolater? Is an idolater a person that has a little golden figurine that he puts on a shelf with candles and incense and worships it as a cosmic deity?

Or is there more that's going on here? Is there more than what an idolater is than just somebody who has a little golden statue on the shelf that they worship? In the tale of Napoleon Dynamite, Uncle Rico needed to make some extra moolah.

[8 : 52] So he went to sell Tupperware. He's trying to sell Tupperware to a couple. And what he's selling is he's trying to sell this 24-piece set.

But in order to try to sweeten the deal, he pulls out a little model ship. Now, the model ship has absolutely nothing to do with the Tupperware, the purpose of the Tupperware, the end of the Tupperware.

But the wife and the couple sees it and she turns to her husband and she says, I want that. And then now the model ship becomes the focus and the desire and the 24-piece Tupperware set just kind of is in the background.

Now, we see the created thing and we say, I want that. And we want it as an end in itself in direct conflict with the Tenth Commandment, which is thou shall not covet.

So wanting something created as an end in itself, as the highest good, the ultimate goal, in the place of the glory of God and enjoyment of God, this is idolatry.

[10 : 01] The idolater worships the created thing instead of the creator. It is giving the honor to the creature that is due to the creator.

The honor that is due to God. Such idols are not necessarily golden figures and carved Buddhas. Such idols can include sex, wealth, fame, self-glory, a life of ease, and even our children's success when it usurps God and his glory as the highest good.

Now, Aquinas wrote that there is a two-fold honor due to God. We must establish him as the goal of our life and we must put our trust of reaching the goal in him.

So making something other than God the goal of our life as the chief end is idolatry. It is illegitimate worship by excessive and inordinate love.

Tolkien wrote of various characters making statements about the ring that are quite fitting here. Statements such as, It is precious to me.

[11:18] Or, It came to me. It is mine. It's my own. And this exemplifies such disorder of sin. Of wanting something as an end in itself instead of wanting the glory of God as the chief end.

We say, I want that. And place the created thing at the center. And when we place the created thing at the center, the glory of God puts, gets nudged off, maybe just a little bit, then more and more into the peripherals.

And that thing becomes so much of our focus that the glory of God just fades away as darkness creeps in. It is inordinate desires, a privation of righteousness and order.

So a particular action in and of itself or a result of it may be permitted in itself, but it becomes sinful because of the circumstances in which we want it.

turning from God for that created thing as an end in itself. So the indulgent action becomes sinful because of an end that is not right.

[12:29] Even such actions that result in some good in and of themselves, nevertheless, are counted as sin because they're not done rightly. Because we want it as our own and not for the glory of God.

We say it is mine, my own. So how does our desires fall short, or how much, I should say, how much of our desires fall short of 1 Corinthians 10:31, which says, let us do all things for the glory of God.

So the course of this world and its ways do not lead to God. The world's end is not the kingdom of God, but the wrath of God.

The world's end is not the kingdom of God, but the wrath of God. So next, the world's end. Verse 5 tells us that those who practice these carnal vices have no inheritance in God's kingdom.

Now, if you were to take, say, a thousand people, a thousand people at random who are living today, no particular way of choosing them, and you were to line them all up in a line, and you were to catalog their entire life before them, cataloging all of their actions, all of their thoughts, and all of their speech, what percentage of them do you think would be found to have been guilty of committing one of these vices?

[13:54] They could be 10%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100% will be found to have committed one or all of these things, either in word and thought or in deed.

And scripture says that having committed one sin is being guilty of the whole law. So does that mean if you take those 1,000 people, you line them up at random, does that mean that all 1,000 of them are personally disqualified and disbarred from the kingdom of God?

Well, the answer is yes. If a person stands self-represented before God, they are required to personally have perfect, exact, entire, perpetual obedience.

So everyone who is not perfectly righteous is found guilty, and God will by no means clear the guilty. Therefore, we cannot come to God self-represented.

We need a mediator. We need the Lord Jesus Christ. When divine justice looks upon those who are united to Christ, they are seen not according to themselves, but according to Christ's perfect, exact, entire, perpetual obedience.

[15:18] So how do we know this is true? Or should I say, how do we actually know that if we are in Christ, our sins will not come back to us to condemn us? We know this because God's promised it.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor avilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you. But you were washed. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Jesus' self-sacrifice on the cross for the sins of his people was, if you remember from the last sermon, a sweet-smelling aroma. A sweet-smelling aroma means it was acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

It satisfied divine justice. 1 John 5, 13 says, These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

[16:42] So repentant believers who are united to Christ are brought safely through the waters of judgment to new lands in God's kingdom. Which brings us to verse 6.

Let no one deceive you. And when it says deceive, deceive means as in to think that there is no danger in sexual immorality, impurity, or covetousness. The devil's tactic here, which is as old as time, is did God really say?

We try to rationalize sin and suppress the truth that either that it is not so sinful or that it is not so dangerous, and suppressing the truth about the wrath of God, and that God will by no means clear the guilty.

But such things are sin, and they are punished by God. Because of these things comes the wrath of God on the children of God, or sorry, on the children of unbelief, the children of disobedience, the children of wrath.

Now notice the absolute contrast that we see between verse 6 and verse 1. Verse 1 speaks of beloved children of God, whereas verse 6, the condemned sons of disobedience.

[17:53] The wrath of God does fall upon the disobedient. The sons of disobedience, by nature children of wrath, those who are unbelieving and unrepentant.

Believers called out of darkness into marvelous light are called as light in this dark world. Believers called out of darkness into marvelous light are called to live as light in this dark world.

So third, the believer at variance. God gave man a soul in order that man may submit to God, to know God, and to love God.

God gave man a body in order to be fruitful and multiply and to manifest the glory of God over the whole earth. God gave man eyes to see the majesty of God.

He gave him ears to hear the word of God. He gave him a mouth to declare the praises of God. He also gave man minds to have thoughts after him, hearts to love him, hands and feet to do his will.

[18:59] He gave man his whole being to be used for the glory of God. But instead, what do we do? We say, it's mine, my own.

Man became corrupt in his whole being and has used soul and body for fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness, and dark deed, dark speech, and dark thought.

All of man's faculties have been affected by corruption and a need of radical renewal by divine intervention. Those who have been regenerated or who have been given a new nature are a new man and enabled more and more to live unto God in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness after the likeness of God, to imitate God as beloved children, to walk worthy of the callings which you have been called, to walk in love, light, and wisdom.

All believers, children of God, beloved children of God, are called to be at variance with the carnal ways of the world. Notice in verse 7, it says, do not be partakers with them.

Here is a call to dissociate with the ways of darkness. What fellowship does light have with darkness? Now, if you'll keep your finger here on Ephesians, we'll keep coming back to this text.

[20:26] Keep your finger here. If you'll turn over to 2 Corinthians 6.14. 2 Corinthians 6.14-18 It says, do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I will dwell in them and walk among them.

I will be their God and they shall be my people. Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, and do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you.

I will be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. So those who share in the course of the world and their walk and their heretical doctrine and in their heretical conduct, unless they repent and embrace Christ, they will share in their end.

[21 : 48] Their inheritance of eternal destruction, which is the wrath of God, do not be partakers with them. Now, living in a dark world, believers aren't immune to temptation.

God's set-apart people have always wrongly sought to emulate the ways of the nations around them. Take, for example, both Lot as well as Saul and ask the question, what happened? How did it come to that? So, Lot, you remember, after fleeing from Sodom and Gomorrah, having fled from destruction, see that his daughters got him drunk and slept with him.

You think, what? How could this happen? How did it come to this? Well, trace it backwards. What was happening? Where were they? So, Lot and his family were living in a very wicked nation and likely had normalized it.

Well, again, trace it backwards. Why were they living in such a wicked nation and normalizing it? Because Lot looked to the land to make his decision based on what the world offered him instead of according to the promise.

[22 : 55] Compromising with the world has consequences. Do not be partakers with them. Think also about Saul. The situation with Saul as a king. Now, Saul was a failure as a king.

So, you think, well, what happened? Well, again, trace it backwards. So, the people, instead of trusting God, looked to the nations and saw that the nations had a king who would deliver them from their enemies.

And so, instead of trusting God, they said, well, we want to be like the nations. We want a king. So, they decided to choose a king. And how did they make their choice? Who did they choose? Well, they chose the one that stood out in a crowd thinking that his stature and his strength would deliver them from their enemies.

Well, who was the people's choice when they chose Saul? Saul was a Benjamite. Well, what was the current affairs of the Benjamites at the time? Well, the Benjamites are the ones, if you recall, are the ones who mobbed a Levite and raped his concubine to death.

This is a very similar degree of wickedness that we saw in Sodom and Gomorrah except the Benjamites weren't destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah. And the Benjamites, it was one of their own who was the people's choice to be their king and to be the leader because they looked at the nations and wanted to be like them.

[24 : 07] Compromising with the world has consequences and do not be partakers with them. If a sick man and a healthy man get together, is it the health or the sickness that's contagious?

It's the sickness that's contagious. Bad company corrupts good morals. Proverbs 12, 26 says, The righteous should choose his friends carefully for the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Now, Puritans give us a bit of a helpful category in this regard. the Puritans refer to what they call either friends of necessity or relations of necessity which would be co-workers, professional relations, neighbors, that sort of thing.

And they are not co-pilgrims on the same course or on the same path or with the same orientation. They are not confidants and close companions but by God's providence they are our neighbors.

So without being stained yourself by the ways of darkness how can you be a light in this dark world that they may be snatched out of the fire? How can you be a witness as light by being at variance with the darkness and speaking truth and love and imparting grace?

[25 : 27] Jude 23 says, Save others by snatching them out of the fire. To others show mercy with fear hating even the garment stained by the flesh. And some at this point would argue and say, Well, what about my witness?

If I'm not acting just like them if I'm not behaving just like them and going along with them then they're not going to see that I'm just like them and then have opportunity to witness to them. But being like the world is only a witness of your own worldliness.

It is being at variance with the world that is a witness. It is not partaking with them in darkness but rather living as one who has been shocked by the gospel renewed and radically reoriented by divine intervention calling out of darkness into marvelous light.

Do not be partakers with them. This call to be separate is not geographical. We think of Israel they were a geopolitical theocratic nation.

We are not. We are not a geopolitical theocratic nation like Israel. Believers are elect exiles who are not at home but we are on our way.

[26 : 39] We are in this world but we are called to not partake with them. To not share in the world's values. Christopher Ash says we do not laugh at their ungodly jokes not assent to their

unworthy sentiments join in their gossip share their preoccupation with money and what money can buy or make an idol with them of their children's success.

So in conclusion this passage gives us indicatives of the world's ways. It gives us indicatives of the world's end and given the indicatives we've seen in previous texts about believers about believers being renewed and reoriented in Christ the imperatives of this text are for the new created believer being renewed in the image of God and that is do not be partakers with them.

Believers are to be at variance with the world and its present darkness. Believers are to be separate by avoiding the values and the behavior of the world which is always inviting the godly to turn aside from their heavenly orientation.

Furthermore this contrast that we see being made with the darkness of the world how the believers are in contrast with the darkness of the world it ought to be characterized by giving thanks.

And this is quite antithetical to carnality of speech. There is an earnestness to giving thanks to God not only that but thankfulness is a preservative against the vices mentioned.

[28 : 20] Do you justify and rationalize inadequate thanksgiving of God? Men will render an account not just of carnal speech but also for every idle word according to Matthew 12 36.

We have not just the duty as creatures to return unto God our giving of thanks but as believers having been purchased by the precious blood of Christ poured out on the cross in our place that we the redeemed have full forgiveness of sins adopted as sons and an inheritance in God's kingdom of glory we have all the reason in the world to pour out our souls in thanksgiving to God.

Isaiah 51 3 says For the Lord comforts Zion He comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden her desert like the garden of the Lord joy and gladness will be found in her thanksgiving and the voice of song.

Now to go back to verse 5 it mentions the inheritance of the kingdom of Christ and God it says For this you know that no fornicator unclean person nor covetous man who is an idolater has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

So the distinction is made of those who do not have an inheritance in the kingdom of God but yet there are those who do have an inheritance in the kingdom of God and if we recall back to the theoretical or that which you ought to know of the first three chapters of Ephesians namely chapter 1 we see redemption purposed accomplished and applied and in verse 14 of chapter 1 it says In him also when you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation and believed in him were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

[30 : 16] So what about you? Are you in the kingdom of darkness or are you in the kingdom of light? Are you self-represented or in the God-man Jesus Christ?

If you are not in the God-man Jesus Christ receive the Lord Jesus Christ and rest on him alone for salvation. Embrace him as redeemer and the only mediator between God and man and pour out your soul giving thanks to him for giving himself as a once-for-all sacrifice for sin acceptable and pleasing to God.

Believers we have full and complete forgiveness of sins. We have the promise of an inheritance in the kingdom of God although we still battle with remaining corruption praise God for Christ's once-for-all sacrifice and the Spirit's gracious work of renewing us in the true righteousness and holiness of God.

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children and walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints. Neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor coarse jesting which are not fitting but rather giving of thanks for this you know that no fornicator unclean person nor covetous man who is an idolater has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

[31 : 55] 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 be partakers with them.

Great God we thank you for your word we thank you for what your word tells us and while all of your creation tells us that you are God it does not tell us how we may be in a right relationship with you it does not reveal to us the gospel.

So we thank you that you have given us divine testimony supernatural revelation of the gospel of grace and how we may be justified for a holy and just God. Lord as we consider the contrast

between the walking after the course of the world versus walk worthy all we can do is but praise you and thank you that you and eternal almighty God have made us alive being dead in trespasses and sin that you made us alive and that you shocked us with the gospel and reoriented us that we would repent and turn to you.

We thank you for your gifts of grace of salvation. Lord if there are those who are not saved here this morning we pray that you would save them. Pray Lord that you would advance your kingdom and that the eternal state of our souls would be secure in Christ.

For those who are believers I pray Lord that you would comfort us in the finished work of Christ on the cross in our place and that it would indeed show us the grievousness of our sin that required the penalty of the pouring out of the life of Christ on the cross.

[33 : 29] Thank you Lord that we can be both filled with gratitude and with thanksgiving and with awe that our penalty has been paid by Christ and that Lord it may also show us the seriousness of sin that we would indeed repent of it and are continuing our duty of repentance that we would hate it and abhor it and turn from it.

We thank you Lord that you are restoring your people after the image of God and true holiness and righteousness. Pray these things in Jesus name Amen.

If you take your hymnals we'll stand and sing hymn number seven Now Blessed Be the Lord our God. Now Blessed Be the Lord our God the God of Israel For he alone doth wondrous works in glory that excel And blessed be his glorious name to all eternity The whole earth let his glory fill Amen So let it be

Amen Lord thank you again for your word Thank you for this Lord's Day Thank you for everyone who's here And we thank you Lord that you use the means of grace to nourish your people We pray that you would indeed do so and that you would make your word effectual to all who are here We pray that you would also equip the saints for the week ahead And we pray Lord that you would bless your people We thank you for the ways which you provide for us including that which we're able to share with each other in this shared meal And we pray that you would bless it to us and help us to enjoy your blessings and enjoy you through these blessings Pray Lord that you would forgive us of all of our sins And we thank you for the promise of forgiveness for those who embrace the Lord Jesus Christ Pray these things in Jesus name And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all Amen Amen Amen