



Ephesians Week 12 - Ephesians 5:6-14

November 26, 2023 - Pastor Jason Caarter

If Paul were alive today, he would likely preach this same message to our church in our culture.

V. 6,7 NLT "Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins [referencing 4:25-5:5], for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. ⁷ Don't participate in the things these people do."

In the NIV: "Don't be fooled" reads "Let no one deceive you with empty words." In the Greek it means "thoughtless, idle, careless" words; words that are void of content/substance; that do not relate to reality.

"Don't participate"—Don't partner with or be partakers in the moment and take in what is offered.

We live in a world where everything is relative, meaning you will always find someone who will dismiss absolute truth or encourage others to do the same. Even if you present evidence, some will still say "I choose to believe something else no matter the evidence you show me."

- How have you experienced this? OR maybe this is you?

V. 8,9 "For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! ⁹ For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true."

Paul now describes the fundamental commitments we, as believers, must operate under as we walk as light-bearers in a dark world.

2 Cor 4:5-6 NIV ⁵ "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"^[a] [and] made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ."

This is our reminder as a Christian to choose to live in God's light and as light in our world. We, because of and for Christ, are His glory displayed.

Reminder: Ephesians 5:3-5 NLT ³ "Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. ⁴ Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. ⁵ You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world."

At the core of the temptation to sin/idolize ourselves and others/to covet is the fundamental belief that God is holding out on us.

Idolatry: Setting anything in the place where only God should be

Greed and coveting: the desire to have what is not ours

- Do you think God is holding out on you in regards to something? Discuss this with someone and see what God wants to teach you about Himself to change this perspective.

Remember Pastor Jason's story of the Atlanta zoo when he was a kid and the feather he coveted and stole? We get sucked into the need to have. We see this saturated in our culture. We have a tendency to pursue and desire things that cannot satisfy, but have a tendency to replace God.

- What are some examples of this?

Paul says the antidote is to imitate God and be thankful. (Eph 5: 1,2)

Christians, don't revert back into non-Christian beliefs. Don't be seduced by rationalization of sin. Don't deceive yourselves. Don't fall for the trap!

2 Peter 2:14 NLT 14 "They commit adultery with their eyes, and their desire for sin is never satisfied. They lure unstable people into sin, and they are well trained in greed. They live under God's curse." (the curse is separation from God)

Back to V. 8 "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light."

- Do you remember where you came from? Not just sin, but how your mind was darkened to the things of God?

Col 1:13 NIV ¹³ "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves..."

You can continue to live like a prisoner though you have received salvation. We must **fight to choose to believe** that Jesus is the truth and He **has** set us free and we live in the light.

Similarities in the culture of Ephesus (then) and America: About 50 different gods and goddesses were worshiped. None were exclusive. Ephesus was mostly known for its idol worship **to the goddess Diana of Ephesus (Artemis in Greek) and she was the goddess of fertility.** Sacrifices of food, drink, and incense were made to her. This became one of the major sources of income for the city.

As Christianity grew, the people who formerly made pilgrimage to Diana/Artemis waned because Christian culture refused to participate. Because of this, there was animosity toward the church because they would not worship all the gods. It was a culture of tolerance for the people worshiped all the gods, except for Christians. *Do you see this in America?*

Paul knew that many Gentiles lived under fear because they never knew if the gods were pleased. They would offer sacrifices and say incantations hoping the gods would be appeased. Their practice of following Jesus now was very foreign and new. You can see how the newer Christians might have still felt they needed to participate in rituals to “cover all their bases”.

- How many of us fall back into that lie that Jesus' sacrifice and God's grace is not enough?
- In what ways are you trying to “appease” God rather than learn to trust that He is the perfect sacrifice for us?

It is important to think about what our culture worships. Think of all the noise of our culture with the purpose of influencing us to worship (to give in to, to side with) things other than Jesus and His holiness.

- What do you watch, listen to, engage in?
- What influences you towards fear, anger, resentment?
- What things have a place in your life above Jesus because of the influence of the culture we live in (just like Ephesus)?

You can hear Paul's warnings and exhortation as a spiritual father: Don't go back! Remember who you are! Take off the old, renew your mind, put on the new! Do it daily! Don't be enticed! How much more time and life will you waste by returning to sin?

- Do you hear Paul's heart?
- I wonder if you hear Pastor Jason's heart for us? For you?
- What do you need to address so you do not return to sin?
- Who do you need to tell who can help you not return?
- What lies keep leading you back to the old you?

V. 9,10 “For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. ¹⁰Carefully find out what pleases the Lord.”

This is very practical wisdom. The light already lives in you and produces what is good, true, and right.

- Why do we struggle to see it in our own lives?

Often it is most clearly discovered through God's word and the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

- Are you in His word? Are you talking to God and allowing Him to speak back to you, to show you what is good, right, and true?

If you have areas in your life and/or habits where you know you can be tempted or deceived, you need a **defensive AND offensive strategy.**

Defensive strategy: The things I need to stay away from or not do

Practical Example: Our tongue/mouth- Gossip/slander

- James chapter 3 calls the tongue a fire and world of evil

- **To Guard my mouth:** I must be careful who I hang out with, listen to, and what I allow myself to say. *Why?*
- Mama said if you don't have anything good to say...
- Better to be silent and though a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt

You cannot play defense indefinitely.

We MUST also have an Offensive strategy: What will I do instead and practice it until it is part of me?

- What will I practice saying?
- What am I saying to myself? We all have soundtracks in our head.
- Is there anything of worth, value, or encouragement I could say instead?
- To live out your Christianity you need a **community** who are doing the same. Community can be incredibly formative in your walk with God.
 - We have 30 life groups of all different kinds where you can find biblical community.
 - We need 10-15 more Life Group leaders/new groups.
- We need the power and leading/prompting of the Holy Spirit.
 - o *How do we learn to hear those promptings and follow?*
- Read the Bible and study God's teachings so we can renew our mind and change our perspective, filters, responses, etc.
- We have to put in the work, but we also have to make it tangible, attainable.
- *How?*

V. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

NASB says "do not 'participate/fellowship with' "-- join in with, or begin to take in as company and the way of life

"Expose" (Greek) may also translate as convict, convince, or rebuke in other passages. There are two connotations here.

1. Live it by example.

2. Share your concern with a brother/sister of faith if you see an issue.

We must start with ourselves. Self-deception is deadly. Jesus said, "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye."

- *What does this mean?*

Have no fellowship with, or entertain within yourself, thoughts, attitudes, or behaviors that allow seeds of evil to take root within you, or to pass on and poison others. But rather expose or convict your own heart to change.

- *What does this practically look like?*

V. 12, 13 "It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light."

In other words: God's light exposes and brings revelation. It is a gift that can set a heart free.

- Pay attention and guard your heart. What do you see? In your language, your thoughts, your actions? Not just in peaceful times but in stress. What are you tempted by? What do you give in to?

God has been saying to Pastor for 2024: "Find Your Courage."

Our decisions matter. You living for Jesus matters. Step out in faith and deal with the issues.

We have mentioned a value recently: Sacrifice is a privilege. Jesus embodied it. Paul spoke of it.

I was thinking this week about heaven. Jesus said he went away to prepare a place for us. There are so many things I can't wait to experience when I go: God's continual presence; nothing negative ever; reuniting with family and friends that have gone before us. And Jesus will be there to present all of these, and so much more, to each of us.

I also believe there will be a time when **we present** to our King **all that we did to serve and honor Jesus** while we were here on earth. **Because of His love, grace, mercy, kindness, strength, power, we were forgiven and empowered to live for Him here.** And we will get to see how many people were transformed through simple obedience and sacrifice. It will be amazing to see how God used His grace and power in the lives of the people we served. Then, we will enter into His joy, and he will say, "well done good and faithful servant."

What we do on earth matters, whether it be big or small, and it matters for eternity.

- The question is: How are you living out your faith?

The true price of anything you do is the amount of time you exchange for it.

- Henry David Thoreau

- In light of our Christianity and in light of eternity, what are you exchanging your life for?

V. 14 "...for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (Or give you light)

Don't settle. Don't be tempted to backslide or return to the things that can't satisfy. Don't coast in your Christianity.

Holy Spirit in His kindness will shine light on our sin. He wants us to be pure before Him, imitate Him, so that all may see Him and know Him through the example of our lives.

- What needs to come to light? What is He shining on that you know you need to respond to?