

Ephesians

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[0 : 00] All right, if you will take your scripture sheet and in 5b, Paul is saying at the top left-hand corner, let no one deceive you with vain words or empty words.

And the implication there, of course, is that there will be those who will try. And deception is always out there. It is always underfoot.

And the apostle is reminding us to be on guard against this, which means, in part at least, we have to develop an attitude of discernment because there's a lot of error out there that is floating around, and a lot of people are propagating it.

So Paul reminds us and informs us of the importance of this. Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

And you wonder, what are these things that he's talking about? And that goes back to the previous page that we were working from. And in that, he is talking about putting off and putting on.

[1 : 17] And where am I here? At the beginning of chapter 5, yes, verse 5, Paul said, And for this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

And then those are these things that he is referring to here when you keep it in context. And I want to make a comment about that because this is terribly important that we understand this.

And that is the verse that I just read about no whoremonger, nor unclean person, covetous man who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of God. These people are those who are engaged in the practicing of these things.

It has no reference, thank God. It has no reference to those who have ever engaged in these things. Because so many have.

And it is out of that pool of vice and lawlessness and rebellion and corruption and everything else that God calls us. And this is what he was referring to when he wrote to the Corinthians.

[2 : 41] And he said, he talked about this very same thing about men who were idolaters and fornicators and adulterers and all the rest. And then he says, and such were some of you.

That's the background of some of you. But you have been cleansed. You have been washed. You have come to faith in Christ. Those things belong to your old life.

And because they belong to your old life, they have no place in the new life now that you are in Christ. So he is not saying that anyone who has ever engaged in these things has no inheritance in the kingdom of God.

That's not what he's saying at all. He's saying that those who have engaged in those things and have come to faith in Christ have put off those things. And this is part of the put off, put on ministry that we talked about a little bit earlier.

So is there any question about that? Because this is a really important point. I mean, the grace of God and its ability to reach into the heart and mind of the very vilest sinner who ever walked the earth is just absolutely amazing.

[3 : 54] But it has that ability. And only the grace of God can do that. And this simply means that no one can have sin or sins, plural, greater in magnitude or in quantity that leaves the grace of God unable to reach them.

Because where sin abounded, grace does much more abound. God has more than sufficient grace for the vilest of sinners. And there are some that are pretty vile, have some pretty bad backgrounds. But to say, yeah, exactly. The Apostle Paul is a pretty good example of that. And the level of sin and degradation to which people can engage is just unbelievable.

It's embarrassing to the human race even. But the grace of God is sufficient to overcome even that. Because if it is not, if it is not, then Jesus Christ did not really do a full and complete work on that

cross.

But he did. And that's what makes his salvation and his forgiveness available. And it is extended to all. No one can out-sin the grace of God.

[5 : 18] No one can say, well, my sin is too great for even God to forgive. No, it isn't. Matter of fact, it might even be the sin of human pride that is making a statement like that.

But it is not beyond the ability and the grace and the desire of God to welcome those who will come to him with open arms. But we must come out of a sense of need.

Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And the only reason people call is because they honestly sense a need that they cannot meet. And that is so critical.

This involves the repentance. Someone has said that God will save us from our sin. But he will not save us in it. And when he saves us, he cleanses us and he pulls us out of that, sanctifies us, sets us apart, makes us a new creation in Christ, puts us on a new path and all the rest that goes with it. And this is what Paul was talking about here. When he says, because of these things, because of these things, because of these things, cometh the wrath of God, that's the displeasure, the judgment of God, upon the children of disobedience.

[6 : 37] And we won't go back there, but let me just remind you, back in Ephesians chapter 2, where Paul is addressing this same crowd of people, the pagans, the idolaters, who came to Christ as a result of his ministry.

He reminds them that you were, you were at one time sons of wrath and children of disobedience. And this is the same crowd that he's talking about here.

When he says that the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience, be not ye therefore partakers with them, for you were sometimes darkness.

He's talking about spiritual darkness. This is what you were at one time in the past. You were in spiritual darkness. But now, and this is two of the biggest little words in all of the Bible.

But now, and it is designed to establish a contrast that is very extensive. It goes all the way from one extreme to the other.

[7 : 50] You were sometimes darkness, but now, as opposed to then, are you light in the Lord. Walk like it. This is all about a plea for Christians to be nothing more than what they are.

You are new creatures in Christ, redeemed, forgiven, cleansed, pardoned. Act like it. Walk like it. And the admonition is there because it is within our capacity to do that.

And that, again, ties in with the put on and put off thing. It is our volition that causes us to put on or put off. And you have the capability of doing that because now, in Christ, you have a spiritual energy and resource that you did not have before.

Make full use of it. Later on, in this same chapter, he is going to be talking about the dynamic that is involved in the filling of the Spirit.

That is, where the Spirit of God empowers us. And as a result, we walk in the Spirit as opposed to the flesh. And the impact upon others is significant.

[9 : 06] So, we are to walk as children of light, conduct our lifestyle. For the fruit of the Spirit, and this reminds us of Galatians, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, kindness, meekness, all of these things.

They are the natural products of the believer that is walking in the Spirit. That's the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord, or well-pleasing to the Lord. Philip says, let your lives be living proofs of the things which please God.

Because now, in Christ, now you have an ability to do that. And you have no excuse for not doing it. Before Christ came into your life, you didn't have that ability.

And you know what? God didn't expect that of you either. Because God makes no demands of those whom he has not already equipped to fulfill those demands.

[10 : 11] So, in doing so, we are proving what is acceptable and pleasing to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Now, there is a fine line here that needs to be drawn. There is a distinction, I think, and I don't want to split hairs, but there is a distinction between friendship and fellowship.

You cannot have friendship, or fellowship, excuse me. You cannot have fellowship with the world. It's an impossibility.

Because the world is marching to a different drum. But you can have friendship. And I don't want to throw this thing off here because it's very important.

And the principle is this. We are not called upon to have fellowship with the world. Because we are on two different levels. What fellowship, Paul says, what fellowship hath light with darkness?

[11:18] What fellowship does Christ have with Belial? None whatever. So, you cannot have any fellowship with the world. But Paul explains what he means when he writes to the Corinthians.

And he says, now, I'm not talking about you having no contact with them at all. Because you can't do it. The only way you can have no contact at all with the world is if you go completely out of the world.

Excuse me. And we're not talking about that. But when you engage in fellowship with someone, you enter into and partake of their activities.

You cannot do that. With the world. Because the world and its activities are at enmity with God. But you can befriend those who are in the world.

Someone said a good definition of fellowship is two fellows in the same ship. They are birds of a feather. They are together.

[12:17] They are brothers and sisters in Christ. And in them and with them, you have something that is more than just friendship.

You have a deep, abiding fellowship. And the bond that unites you is the person and work of Jesus Christ and your faith in Him.

But we are to be friends with those who are in the world. This doesn't mean we hobnob with them and we engage in their activities like they do.

That's the fellowship thing. And that's the distinction. But we are to befriend them. That is, we are to treat them with kindness. We are to treat them with understanding.

We are to treat them with compassion. This is being a friend to the world. This is the way Jesus Christ was a friend to sinners. He never partook of their sin.

[13:14] But He made Himself available to them. And He could approach them in a way that was not judgmental or condemning. Someone has said, if you want to win some, you have to be winsome.

And there's nothing wrong with spreading around Christian good cheer when you have opportunity to extend it to an unbeliever, someone who is outside of Christ.

We need to remind ourselves of where we were before we came to faith. We were in the same boat that they were. And we need to keep that in mind.

So, this is an important distinction here. Any thoughts or comments on that before we go on?

Anybody? Okay. Just want that to be really clear. And have no, here we are, verse 11.

Have no fellowship with them. You can't. You just can't do that. Have no fellowship with them, the unfruitful works of darkness.

[14:14] And He's already described in this context, earlier in this same chapter, what those unfruitful works of darkness are. And they are, well, fornication, verse 3, fornication, all uncleanness, covetousness, whoremongering, unclean person, covetous man, idolatry.

These are all unfruitful deeds of darkness that He's talking about here in the context. And then He says, but rather, reprove them. I don't mind telling you, this is a verse that I've been struggling with for some time now, because the implications of it are really significant.

And I want to point them out to you and look to you for some input that you may have to add to it.

Reproving these unfruitful works of darkness is something, is a responsibility that we are charged with.

And the question is, how do you go about doing that? How do you reprove these works of darkness? Coney Bear translates it, yea, rather, expose their foulness.

Weymouth says, set your faces against them. And the New English Bible says, but show them up for what they are.

[15:46] These unfruitful works of darkness involve the whole category of human sinful behavior. And we are called upon to reprove it, to expose it.

Is it possible to do that and be politically correct? Well, I think that, again, political correctness is how things are said.

It's not what is said. And if someone, a friend of ours or just an acquaintance or whatever, has inappropriate behavior, we should call out the bad behavior, but we don't have to condemn the

person with that behavior.

Yeah. I hear you, and I agree entirely. You hate the sin, and you love the sinner. Problem we have, and it's a big problem. How do you separate those?

You know, when somebody, when somebody's put in jail for passing bad checks, they wrote bad checks, okay? And the judge says, I'm going to sentence you to 30 days in jail.

[17:08] And we say, now, wait a minute. You're supposed to hate the sin and love the sinner. Well, what's the judge going to do in a case like this?

Maybe he could just put the guy's signature in jail. Hmm? I mean, wouldn't that work? Yeah, you know. Of course it does. How do you separate the sin from the sinner?

And here's a big problem. This is something the world really capitalizes on. You're being judgmental. And that's often the retort that believers get.

If they show disapproval or disdain or rejection of somebody's behavior, you're being judgmental. How are we going to handle that? Because this is a responsibility we have.

We're supposed to be doing this. And I don't think we're doing it very well. Dan? There's a thing called tough love. All right. And if you go to this person and let them know you're doing it because you care for them and you're doing it direct, you're doing it sincerely, and you're doing it with your heart, that's what it works.

[18:19] Okay. Joe? I think this is true. It means you've got to explain to them and show them or tell them why what they're doing is going to hurt them and others around them.

The why of it. Why is it bad that what you're doing what you're doing? You just can't say, oh, that's a sin, you shouldn't be doing that. You've got to explain. Like you would your children, when they do something across the block, to get a ball in the street, you explain to them you could get hit by a car.

You've got to explain and prove. I think that's reproving that person. It's helping them understand why that is bad. Okay. Thank you. Why is it sin? Thank you. Yeah. It's a 24-hour news cycle.

This comes up all the time. And some people don't want answers. They just simply want exposure on the news cycle.

Yeah. How do we process all that? Yeah. Because it happens over and over all the time. Oh, yeah. They don't give a rip about you pointing out how contradicted they are.

[19:26] Right. Their point's right. Because we're on TV and we're making a big spot. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Good point. Someone else. And by the way, it just goes without saying here, but maybe I should say it anyway.

To be able to improve unfruitful works of darkness, to be able to call something unacceptable behavior or sinful behavior, requires that there be a standard or a gauge by which behavior is evaluated.

This is one of the big problems we're facing today. And it's called moral relativism. So, what you think is sin and what is sin in your eyes isn't sin in my eyes.

It isn't wrong for me. So, don't try to force your standards on me. And this is what we're getting today. Right. The denial of moral absolutes opens the floodgates so that each individual becomes their own evaluator as to what is right or what is wrong.

Right. When you don't have the compass point for a north star that sets the standard, then anything goes.

[20:56] And that's where we're at today. That's very much where we're at today. So, in order to reprove them, you have to call them what they are.

And fellas, let me tell you something. This is a really tough thing to do. And you cannot name a prophet in the Old Testament or in the New that did that without paying a terrible price.

Some of them pay for it with their life. When you deliver the truth of God based on the standards set forth in the Word of God, you are going to get opposition.

And it all comes down to this thing. How many times have I said this? The issue is always authority. Always has been. Always will be.

By what authority are you saying what I am doing is wrong? And therein lies the rub. Because once you do not recognize a central authority, then everybody becomes their own personal authority.

[22:16] And there's no basis for evaluating anyone. It's whatever. To each his own. Whatever. And that makes it difficult to combat this.

So, what I'm struggling with as a pastor, and you know, just about every pastor, I think, probably laments the fact that just about every Sunday he's preaching to the choir.

You don't have access to the people who really need this message. You have access to people who are already in sympathy with it and are tracking on it. So, how do we get this out there to those who really need it?

Joe. Well, you end up having nothing but chaos. Because everybody's doing their own thing. You end up having nothing but chaos. It's like a government or a country that doesn't have laws. Doesn't have a, you know, a police to keep them in track, you know.

You have chaos. That's precisely where we are. That's what we have over there in the Middle East now with ISIS. You've got chaos. Every faction wanting to do everything their way. So, it leads to that.

[23 : 20] That's what you're going to have. When there is no central authority, then it's Katie bar the door. Roger. Yeah. I think probably the best way for me is in my former life I did things that I wish I hadn't done now.

And people see that change. That's when you're kind of improvement. You know, you don't do it anymore. Why isn't he doing it?

Maybe at least they're being appreciative. Yeah. Why is he not drinking or whether he's going to smoke them or whatever? He's by his name. Well, the power of a changed life, a changed testimony to a changed life is amazing.

There's no question about it. And Roger himself is an example. And frankly, yours truly could give an example of that, too.

I well remember at my 25th. Boy, this has gone back a long ways. My 25th high school reunion. I graduated from Springfield High, class 53, and it still amuses me.

[24 : 37] And when they sent out the invitations to it and everything, I kept in touch with some of them. And one of the gals who was in charge of sending out the invitations, setting up the program and everything, asked me if I would give the invocation at the beginning of it.

And I said, sure, I'd be glad to. So time came and everybody would see it, you know, and I would see it up at the table, the head table. There were, oh, I don't know, there were well over a couple hundred people there.

And I gave the return thanks for the meal and the evening and everything. And after the whole evening was over, two or three of the guys together came up to the table where I was before I could get away.

And he said, here he is. Tell him. Tell him, Wiseman, you're the same guy. Tell him you're the same guy. I said, what are you talking about? And he said, we were just having a big argument back there that you were not the Wiseman that was in high school when we were there when they graduated, that you're a different Wiseman, right?

And I said, well, no, I said, I'm really, I'm the same guy, you know, Marv Wiseman and blah, blah, blah. And I spent so much time in Charlie Fox's office.

[25 : 52] He was a principal. And I'd walk into his office and old Charlie Fox would put his hands on his hips and say, okay, Wiseman, what is this time?

And I was a poor student and a hell raiser and everything else. And they just couldn't believe that this was the same guy who was actually offering a prayer the 25th anniversary.

So my story to them was, fellas, this just goes to show you the grace of God knows no limits. So many of us can testify to that, I'm sure. Somebody else?

Kevin? Yeah. Hey, Marv, can I say something about 10 and 11? Say something about what?

Verses 10 and 11. Sure. Right here. Sure. First of all, we don't understand what we're up against.

That's right. That's right. You can't even see this type of evil. But, and it says, proving what is acceptable for God.

[26 : 52] What's the solution to everything that we've been talking about? What's the solution?

Because a lot of times, most of the time, we function more on a problem, crying about the problem. Then we do the solution to the problem.

And then God gives you the solution in the very first song. It says, blessed is the man that walk up not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand up in the way of sinners, for a citizen of the sea of the squirrelful.

But his delight, that word delight, is in the law of the Lord. And does he meditate in it day and night? So that means that if you stay in this word, read this word, and all that time, like when you was in the world, and all the fleshy things you was doing, you've got to devote the same amount of time in that word.

You have to, and I lie, Mark. Amen. Amen, brother. There's hours and hours and hours, and you will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which means for fruit. And you see, you've got to devote the same amount of time of God.

And then there's tricks. A lot of things, we just look at the regular status quo. Like number 11 says, and we have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. We just think regular darkness is the same old status quo, but like now, it wasn't even God's children.

[28 : 06] Now, this type of weather right now, this is the hibernation period in the spirit, where everybody ain't in their Bibles, ain't there? Because it's too cold to go out there. Everybody, they study it, they in it.

You know what I mean? Oh, glory, hallelujah. And God's given a revelation because now you're in it all day because you ain't got nowhere to go. But this one old pastor, he said something that I didn't get it for a year.

He said, don't let the spring make you forget about the king. How many of us, when that, this is a work of darkness, when that spring come along, that Bible, the top of that Bible will be just as dusty. It will be just as dusty. Anybody know what I'm talking about? And all that read and spell of your door goes out the window. Because there's so many things to do.

I said, it's warm outside. Oh, man, we're going to lie. But then you start, you're reading. Oh, you cut down. Am I lying, Mark? Amen.

[29 : 09] Anybody know what I'm talking about? I've been there. Been there. I'm talking about, am I reading nonstop? There's so many things out in the world I can do. And that's a work of darkness. Because in the wintertime, if I'm in Christ, it's going to be year-round and tomorrow.

In-season and out-of-season. Don't let that heat take away my blessing that God has given me. Because I've got all kinds of things to do. It's summertime.

Ooh, weeks. I ain't praying as much as I was praying. I ain't reading as much as I was reading. I mean, I always have to find something. And that's a work of darkness. Amen, brother.

Amen. Amen. Thank you, Kevin. Thank you. Yes, Roger? One of the cowboys, these dear friends, passed on now. She used to say, no Bible, no breakfast.

Okay. Yeah. No Bible, no breakfast. Yeah, that could be a curative. No Bible, no breakfast. Very straight right. Okay. Any other thoughts about this?

[30 : 12] Reproving the unfruitful deeds of darkness. Yes. In many cases, you're not against an individual. You're against an idea. Yeah, that's right. You see? That makes it more difficult. Yeah.

Yeah. That's true. True enough. Jim. I think a lot of times, so much of the tone you take. Pence has a great line. He says, I'm a conservative and I'm not mad about it.

It seems to me we should take this. We're a Christian and we're not mad about it. Amen. The tone you take with, I mean, we've seen some people cook with us when we were doing things wrong. So, to me, that's always important.

With Joseph, how you present it, how you correct, how you improve, is always important. Thank you. If you want to win some, you have to win. To be winsome.

Absolutely. And we, you know, what we're supposed to be doing is reflecting the joy of the Lord. And it's a very positive thing.

[31 : 09] And, frankly, this is something the world really doesn't know anything about. And we have the responsibility and the privilege of enlightening them to the source of true joy and true forgiveness and true fulfillment and everything that goes with it.

And when you reprove the unfruitful deeds of darkness, you're contrasting those joy-filled concepts with this.

You're using that to counter these things. And it requires a real skill level. And it requires dependence on the Lord to do it. Because we all know, and maybe some of us have, I know I've done my share of the spiritual bowl in the china shop before, where you can do more damage than good.

And sometimes we can get carried away with our zeal and our being, you know, convinced of the truth that we can just become heavy-handed and judgmental in the way it's presented and

everything.

And, frankly, all that does is turn people off. Because that's certainly not a good advertisement for the gospel. Anything else before we, yeah, Raj? I know you, probably, if you was in the Army, the F word was quite often used.

[32 : 30] In my earlier days of the Army, the equipment was not built very well. And it was great. Oh, yeah. And the F word would come out. I remember one time I was walking in the mall, and these two ladies got in there.

And that F word just flew out of there. Does the light sound that bad? We're not that bad, you know? I got to prove. Yeah. So, let's not use that to call.

Yeah. Yeah. Amen. Yes. Have you ever heard this before? When I got ordained, I'd say to him how. I was coming out, I had my little man. I said, man, I said, this guy would be through with me, but I didn't know. I said, man, it's so good to be a Christian.

He said, why would you want to be a Christian? He's looking at it like, what do you mean, why would you want to be a Christian? He said, would you rather be Christ-like? Have you ever heard that before?

[33 : 31] Yeah. Some people would say, I'm not no Christian. I want to be Christ-like. And there is a difference. Oh, absolutely. Absolutely, there is a difference. There is a difference.

And I never understood that for a minute. So, I just, that's the truth. There is a real difference. And let me just conclude before I breakfast with this thought. And it has made an impact on my own mind and heart for a number of years.

That God has no greater asset on this earth than a believer who is walking in the spirit. And God has no greater liability on this earth than a believer who is walking in the flesh.

Because his life is contradictory to what he really is. And that's exactly what Paul is dealing with in this portion of Ephesians.

It's for Christians to be what they truly are. Because God has already equipped us and enabled us to be everything he requires us to be. And yet, he is committed to using our volition to make that work.

[34 : 41] Because God will not make you, he will not force you to be spiritual or to live a spiritual life. But he does provide you with all the dynamics that's needed to do that.

And we simply have to, as I've used that illustration before, be willing to pull that trigger that releases the power. So, thanks guys. I appreciate all the input. Yes? I can remember in my very early talk.

It wasn't all that long ago. But I told this fellow who was discipling me. He said, I'd be afraid to deliver. That I'd say something wrong and that I'd ruin the guy's life.

Yeah. And he said to me, Pastor, get off your high course. Who do you think you are that you could send somebody away from the war? Yeah. Good point.

Good point. Absolutely. I appreciate that. Thank you.