

1 Read Ephesians 5:1-14**2 A walk of light flows from a heart that earnestly prays Eph. 3:16-19.****3 One of my favorite movies is “The Princess Bride.”**

At one point in the movie, Wesley, the hero is found by his friends and they think that he is dead...only to learn that he is just “mostly dead.” A few moments later, after Wesley has not functioned to well that day, he kindly asks his friends to give him a break because he has been “mostly dead” all day long.

Sometimes Christ-followers live like Wesley—‘mostly dead’ or ‘kind of dead’ or ‘sort of alive.’

Living the Christian life as though you are mostly dead or sort of alive is like being ‘kind of pregnant.’

It can’t be that way—you either are pregnant or you are not pregnant—there is no in between.

That is what Paul says in Ephesians 4-5 that a person is either spiritually alive or dead. Which is it?

In 5:3-14, Paul addresses the area of sexual purity—how you treat your sexuality reveals your heart.

In the area of the sexual purity, spiritually dead people live one way & spiritual alive people live another.

Some statistics indicate there isn’t much difference in behavior in the area of sexuality between those who claim to be Christ-followers and those who make no such claim. Paul would say that should not be.

But I’m not interested in statistics this morning...you can believe about them what you want.

What I interested in is your heart and my heart because we are not a statistic but we are each people.

Each of us this morning is either living successfully in the area of sexuality or in a degree of failure.

Last week in Ephesians 5:1-2, we saw that God has two simple commands for every Christ follower:

5:1 Imitate God: Be & live like God

Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children

5:2 Walk in love: love others as Jesus Christ has loved you.

And walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

4 Many people take this 2nd command to walk in love to mean: 1) Accept everyone where they are AND 2) Approve of their lifestyle, choices and beliefs. **This is the heart of the doctrine of toleration.**
Is that what Paul means: accept people where they are AND affirm or agree with any belief or behavior?

The Bible and Jesus’ life & teaching affirms point #1 but strongly disagrees with point #2.

#1: We must meet people where they are & put ourselves in their shoes, no matter how they are living.

#2: Jesus did not approve of people’s lifestyle, choices & beliefs blindly, rather He evaluated their lifestyles, choices & beliefs in light of God’s will and told them where they were in light of that.

For example: Jesus told the woman caught in adultery He did not condemn her but rather forgave her.

AND Jesus also told her to go and sin no more. (Jn. 8:11) **Jesus loved—forgave AND corrected her!**

LOVE accepts with people as they are but does not approve of their sin.

LOVE connects with people as they are but does not OK sin or call evil - good or call wrong - right!

So what does it mean for Christ-followers to walk in love in the context of sexuality?

We are told by our culture that for us to love them means that we must BOTH accept them as they are in their sexual beliefs & practices AND approve of their sexual beliefs & practices. What does God say?

Paul answers that question in Eph. 5:3-14.

Paul gives a word of exhortation & three supporting truths—3 spotlights on what it means to walk in love.

5 Christ-followers are to live sexually pure lives in their actions, desires and words. 3-6

6 Christ-followers are to be sexually pure...BECAUSE 'impure people' are not part of God's kingdom.

To be sexually pure, Christ-followers must-

- 1) AVOID impurity...because they are light in Christ (7-8a)
- 2) SHINE... because the fruit of LIGHT is to be born in their life. (8b-10)
- 3) EXPOSE sexual sin... because LIGHT exposes darkness (11-14)

7 Christ-followers are to live sexually pure lives (in their actions, desires and words). 3-6

All sexual sin (of action/desire/speaking) is evil: NOT fitting for believers.

Vs 3 Sexual sins of action/desire... *Pornea*: to sell, sex before marriage=fornication
Akathasia: not clean or pure—all sexual deviances=homosexuality, *pleonexia*: wanting more...
*Covetousness (wanting what is not yours, not content...drives/empowers pornea/akathasia
In effect, Paul says: Let there be no hint among you of immorality or impurity' NIV...

Vs 4 Sexual sins of speaking... *filthiness (obscene), foolish talk (untrue), crude joking (demean/value)*
which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

2 errors: speaking of sexuality as 1) gross--filthiness 2) trivial--flippancy.

Inability to refer to sexuality without treating it as either filthy or trivial.

Speaking of sexuality in a gross/obscene way or speaking of it with a despising/demeaning attitude.

Paul's solution: Thank God for sexuality rather than speaking of it as gross or trivial.

If you thank God for His gift of sexuality=not controlled by discontentment at what you don't have.

Gratitude is what you feel when you believe God is for you and not against you.

It's what you feel when you believe He gives you only what is good & withholds no good thing.

Thanksgiving is the alternative to a life driven by cravings for what you don't have (sex, money...).

Thanksgiving says, "In God I have all that is good, & I will not be driven to dishonor the worth of His name just to get a few sexual sensations or a few new toys."

When your heart is overflowing with gratitude to God for His gift of sexuality within marriage, you don't speak of it with filthy language or treat sexuality lightly.

8 REASON... Because impure people are not part of God's kingdom but will experience God's wrath.

Impure people (idolaters) literally "dethrone God."

Vs. 5...a covetous person is called an idolater: "... one who is covetous (ie: an idolater)."

The root problem about being driven by the domination of earthly desires is that it dethrones God.

Covetousness says: God is not adequate as a satisfying treasure; I must have sex or \$ or power...

When Paul calls covetousness: "idolatry," saying in effect, Either God or sex or ??? is your god."

If God is your pleasure and satisfaction and hope and joy and master—ALL of life, including sexuality will be governed by an overflowing gratitude to him for his goodness, glory, grace...

How does Paul motivate Christ followers to eliminate sexual sin from our lives? 3 WAYS

1. Paul doesn't quote the 10th (Don't covet) or 7th Commandment (Don't commit adultery)

Why not? True Christian obedience: is obedience by faith from the new renewed heart.

Obedience from the heart: comes from agreeing AND loving God's will—God's way.

2. In verses 3 & 4, Paul reminds them sexual sins are not fitting with who they are in Christ.

Sexual sins are not "*proper among saints*" vs. 3 AND "*are out of place*" vs. 4.

Don't obey just because it is right BUT also because as a new creature, it is what you want.

3. In verses 5-6, Paul threatens hell for those who are sexually impure.

Paul's point of saying that the danger of experiencing God's wrath & missing the kingdom is NOT to enslave people to unwilling and burdensome obedience.

Rather it is a pointed way of saying that true Christians are new people in Christ and as a new person, Jesus will & must change you so that sexual sin doesn't characterize your life.

Obeying God from a renewed heart brimming with joy and thanksgiving to God is what true Christians do because that is who they are AND that this response is NOT optional.

When God reveals his wrath, He is not contradicting gospel motives of faith, freedom & joy.

Instead God's wrath intensifies His demand to trust in His mercy & delight in his grace.

What is God's will for human sexuality?

- 9 1. Human sexuality gives language & experiential knowing of God's relationship with mankind. (Eph 5:22f)
10 2. God created human sexuality to be expressed in the covenant of marriage—marriage's glue. (Gen. 2:24)
11 3. Sex within the covenant of marriage is both God-pleasing and mutually-satisfying (Song of Solomon).
12 4. God desires a husband and a wife to avoid both extremes of prudishness & perversion. (Pr. 5:15-23)

13 LIGHT #1. Christ-followers are not to dabble in impurity. 7-8a

Paul says, 'since God's wrath is experienced by those who are sexually impure don't join them.'

In other words, don't do some activity that is deserving of God's wrath/judgment/anger...

REASON...BECAUSE they are LIGHT in Christ and not of the darkness of sin.

WHY NOT? You are a new person—You WERE DARKNESS but now ARE LIGHT in the Lord.

Light by its very nature/character does not hold hands with darkness—rather 'chases it away.'

Paul could have given many reasons why Christ-followers should not dabble in sexual impurity...

For example, he could have said fornication, pornography & other sexual sins are to be avoided because-

- 1) Sexual sins are 'Personal'—it affects you in ways other sins don't (1 Cor. 6:16-18)
- 2) Sexual sins are Like quick sand—it sucks you in quickly and powerfully (Pr. 7:21-27)
- 3) Sexual sins are Deadly—it will ruin your life (Pr. 5:3-4, 6:24-32)
- 4) Sexual sins are Stealing—it is taking that which is not yours to take (1 Thess. 4:3-6)
- 5) Sexual sins are Offensive to Jesus—it corrupts God's image of intimacy with God (
- 6) Sexual sins are Hell-deserving—it sends people to an eternity in hell (Matt. 5:28-30)

But the reason Paul gives is because YOU ARE LIGHT in Christ...Jesus' light is ON in you!

Paul's point is that light by its very nature, not only avoids darkness but chases darkness away.

The LIGHT that is in Christ-followers is the Person of the Holy Spirit living in their renewed spirit!

*Because of the Holy Spirit, sexual sin is NO longer any fun (in a guilt free way) for a true believer!

-There is now a 'catch', a personal built in governor in our life—the Holy Spirit!

-The Holy Spirit is deeply grieved when we sin in general & specifically when we commit sexual sin.

*I believe that it is this grieving of the Spirit that happens when true Christians commit sexual sin that keeps them from truly enjoying sexual sin as they once did.

14 LIGHT #2. Christ-followers SHINE the LIGHT of Christ where they are & in all they do. 8b-10

Paul gives a negative and a positive: don't do this, but rather do this.

Paul states this as a command: **WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT.**

I think in effect Paul is saying, "Accept the reality/truth that in Christ—YOU ARE LIGHT!"

With the Spirit living in your human spirit—YOU ARE LIGHT...God's LIGHT is ON in YOU!

REASON...BECAUSE LIGHT bears good fruit!.

Paul's says the evidence Christ is in you through the Spirit is that He bears fruit in/through you.

What is this fruit like?

Goodness=benevolence: quality that adapts a thing to the end for which it was designed.

Righteousness=just or right: being in conformity to God's law

Truth=reality, that which really is, being in conformity to God's nature

In vs 10, Paul clarifies what living as LIGHT means—discern: examine & approve what pleases God.

In essence: whatever pleases God is that which is good=benevolent, right=fitting, true=real!

15 LIGHT #3. Christ-followers expose sin with LIGHT of Christ. 11-14

Paul gives a negative and a positive: don't do this, but rather do this.

What are some of the unfruitful works of darkness?

Calling abortions a mother's choice rather than calling it murder/sin.

Calling homosexuality as a righteous lifestyle choice rather than calling it sin.

Calling gossip a person's right to say it as they see it rather than calling it slander/sin.

REASON...BECAUSE LIGHT exposes darkness.. Vs. 12-13

Verse 13 When **LIGHT** gets near a darkness—*truth happens!*

Light allows people to see what they really are. Deceptions and half-truths are blown away.

Fornication, pornography, flirtatiousness, sexual innuendos are examples of sexual darkness.

Each of these survives and thrives as long as the LIGHT of Christ doesn't shine on it.

But wherever the light of truth and love comes, darkness flies away.

Sexual sins are shameful (should be 'blush-causing'! They really are evil!

Vs. 12 Are Christians blushing?

Or are we desensitized to sexual sin—God's view of sexuality has been eroded away!

Jer. 8:12 *'Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the LORD.'*

Vs. 13 Is **LIGHT** shining in your actions?

Is LIGHT shining in your words?

The aim is positive: shine LIGHT of Christ AND negative: reveal the error hidden in the darkness.

Darkness of pornography-- light of good deeds—help those addicted

light of loving dialogue—show from Scripture how/why pornography

Vs. 14 Are non-Christians waking up around you?

Is. 60:1 *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.'*

A Walk of LIGHT...

1. Are you 'LIGHT' or 'DARK'?

2. Light is greater than darkness BUT light can be hidden by compromise.

-Actions? Looking at? Love/Respect spouse?

-Desires? Married/Single: Grateful? Content?

-Words? Honor God's purpose for sexuality?

3. Light doesn't draw attention to itself, but to the ONE on whom it shines.

-Exposes & Drives Darkness Away

-Reveals & Invites People to Come

- 1 Read Ephesians 5:1-14
 - 2 A walk of light flows from a heart that earnestly prays Eph. 3:16-19.
 - 3 **Princess Bride** Wesley, hero found by friends think he is dead... "mostly dead." Give me break!
Sometimes CF live Wesley—"mostly dead" "kind dead" "sort alive" "kind of pregnant."
Eph 4-6 either spir alive or dead. Which is it? **5:3-14 sexual purity—sexuality reveals heart**
Statistics - difference in sexuality between claim be CF and –CF Paul say that should not be.
NOT interested in statistics--bel what you want--interested your heart & my heart: succ/defeat
Eph 5:1-2, **Imitate God & Love as Jesus loved**
 - 4 2nd command 1) Accept everyone where they are AND 2) Approve of their behavior and beliefs.
This is the heart of the doctrine of toleration. Is that what Paul means? Accept & Approve
Bible & Jesus' life & teaching Yes-#1 NO-#2 Accept as they were BUT –approve behave/bel
Jesus told woman adultery not condemn but forgave AND told her go & sin no more. Jn 8:11
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