

Ephesians: Grace Changes Everything

Part 10 – Children of Light

Today, as we continue our journey through the book of Ephesians, we come to a passage that calls us to live as children of light. In the first part of Ephesians 5, Paul exhorts us to imitate God, walk in love, and live as light in a dark world. This passage provides practical guidance on how to reflect the character of Christ in our daily lives, emphasizing purity, wisdom, and thanksgiving.

Ephesians 5:1-20 *"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person - such a person is an idolater - has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.*

Therefore, do not be partners with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible - and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: 'Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'

Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This passage can be divided into three main sections: the call to imitate God and walk in love (verses 1-7), the exhortation to live as children of light (verses 8-14), and the instruction to walk in wisdom and be filled with the Spirit (verses 15-20). Each section provides us with practical guidance on how to live out our faith in a way that reflects the character of Christ.

The Call to follow God's example (5:1-7)

Paul begins this passage with a powerful exhortation: *"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."* This call to follow God's example is rooted in our identity as His dearly loved children. Just as children naturally seek to imitate their parents, we are called to imitate our heavenly Father. Reflecting God's values involves walking in love and following the example of Christ. Paul reminds us that Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. This selfless, sacrificial love is the standard for our conduct. We are called to love others with the same kind of love that Christ has shown us.

Paul then contrasts this call to love with a list of behaviours that are incompatible with our new identity in Christ: *"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving."*

Sexual immorality, impurity, and greed are behaviours that belong to the old self and have no place in the life of a believer. These behaviours are characterized by selfishness and a disregard for God's standards. Paul emphasizes that such behaviours must not even be named among us, highlighting the importance of maintaining purity and integrity.

In addition to avoiding immoral behaviours, Paul also warns against obscenity, foolish talk, and coarse joking. These forms of speech are inappropriate for believers and can undermine our witness. Instead, we are called to cultivate a spirit of thanksgiving, reflecting an attitude of gratitude and praise.

Paul provides a solemn warning about the consequences of engaging in such behaviours: *"For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person - such a person is an idolater - has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient."*

Those who persist in these sinful behaviours without repentance demonstrate that they have not truly experienced the transforming power of God's grace. Paul warns against being deceived by empty words that minimize the seriousness of sin. The wrath of God is a real consequence for those who continue in disobedience.

Therefore, Paul exhorts us: *"Therefore do not be partners with them."* We are called to separate ourselves from the practices and influences of those who live in disobedience. This separation does not mean avoiding all contact with unbelievers, but rather refusing to participate in their sinful behaviours and values.

The Exhortation to Live as Children of Light (5:8-14)

Paul continues with an exhortation to live as children of light: *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord."*

Paul reminds us of our former condition: *"For you were once darkness."* This description emphasizes the totality of our previous state of sin and separation from God. However, through Christ, we have been transformed: *"but now you are light in the Lord."* This new identity as light reflects our relationship with Christ, who is the Light of the world.

As children of light, we are called to walk in a manner that reflects our new identity. Paul describes the fruit of light as consisting of all goodness, righteousness, and truth. These qualities are the evidence of a life transformed by the light of Christ. We are called to pursue what is pleasing to the Lord, seeking to align our lives with His will.

Paul then instructs us to *"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible - and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: 'Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"*

We are called to reject the fruitless deeds of darkness and to expose them. This involves not only avoiding participation in sinful behaviours but also shining the light of truth on them. Exposing darkness means bringing sin into the light of God's truth, which leads to conviction and transformation.

Paul acknowledges that it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. This highlights the pervasiveness of sin and the need for vigilance in guarding our hearts and minds. However, when sin is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This transformative power of light brings hope and renewal.

Paul concludes this section with a call to awaken: *"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."* This call to awaken is a summons to spiritual vigilance and renewal. It is a reminder that Christ's light brings life and transformation to those who respond to His call.

The Instruction to Walk in Wisdom and Be Filled with the Spirit (5:15-20)

Paul then shifts to a focus on wisdom and being filled with the Spirit: *"Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."*

Paul calls us to walk with wisdom, being careful and intentional in how we live. This involves making the most of every opportunity, recognizing that the days are evil. The urgency of the times calls for discernment and purposeful living. We are to seek God's will and align our lives with His purposes.

Paul contrasts wisdom with foolishness, urging us to avoid foolishness and to seek understanding of the Lord's will. This understanding comes through a deep relationship with God, rooted in His Word and guided by the Holy Spirit. Wisdom involves applying God's truth to our daily lives, making decisions that reflect His character and values.

Paul then gives a specific instruction: *"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."* This instruction highlights the contrast between worldly indulgence and spiritual fullness. Drunkenness leads to debauchery, a lifestyle of excess and moral corruption. In contrast, being filled with the Spirit leads to a life that is controlled and guided by God's presence.

To be filled with the Spirit means to be under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit. This involves a continual surrender to His leading and a dependence on His power. Being filled with the Spirit results in a life marked by joy, thanksgiving, and mutual encouragement.

Paul describes the characteristics of a Spirit-filled life: *"speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

A Spirit-filled life is characterized by worship and praise. This involves speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, encouraging and edifying each other through worship. Singing and making music from our hearts to the Lord reflects a deep, inner joy that overflows in worship.

Thanksgiving is another hallmark of a Spirit-filled life. We are called to give thanks always and for everything, recognizing God's sovereignty and goodness in all circumstances. This attitude of gratitude is rooted in our relationship with God and reflects a trust in His providence.

Practical Applications:

Radiate God's Love:

Reflect on the sacrificial love of Christ and seek to imitate it in your daily interactions. Consider ways to demonstrate selfless love to those around you, especially in challenging situations. Ask God to help you love others with the same kind of love that Christ has shown you. Take time to examine your relationships and identify areas where you can grow in love. Are there people in your life who are difficult to love? Ask God to soften your heart and to give you the grace to love them as He does. Begin by identifying small, everyday opportunities to show kindness and love to those around you. This could be as simple as offering a listening ear to a friend, helping a neighbour with groceries, or showing patience in a difficult situation. Acts of kindness are a tangible way to reflect Christ's love.

Reflect on any unresolved conflicts or grudges you may be holding. Ask God for the strength and grace to forgive those who have wronged you, just as Christ has forgiven you. Seek reconciliation where possible, fostering peace and unity in your relationships. Look for ways to go above and beyond in demonstrating love. This could mean sacrificing your time, resources, or comfort to meet the needs of others. Consider volunteering for a local charity, supporting a family in need, or dedicating time to mentor someone in your community.

Cultivate Purity and Integrity:

Avoid behaviours and speech that are incompatible with your identity in Christ. Commit to living a life of purity and integrity, both in your actions and in your words. Seek to honour God in all areas of your life. Reflect on your daily habits and interactions. Are there areas where you need to make changes to align with God's heart? Ask God to help you cultivate purity and integrity in every area of your life.

Find a trusted friend or mentor with whom you can share your struggles and goals for purity and integrity. Accountability partnerships provide support, encouragement, and prayer as you seek to live a life that honours God. Be mindful of the media, conversations, and environments you engage with. Choose to consume content that aligns with your values and uplifts your spirit. Create boundaries that help you avoid situations that may lead to temptation or compromise your integrity.

Spend time each day reading and meditating on God's Word. Allow His truth to renew your mind and strengthen your resolve to live a life of purity and integrity. Use a journal to record your reflections and prayers, seeking God's guidance and strength.

Live as Children of Light:

Embrace your identity as light in the Lord and seek to reflect His character in all that you do. Pursue what is good, right, and true, and seek to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Be intentional about living in a way that reflects your new identity in Christ. Consider practical ways to shine the light of Christ in your community. Are there opportunities to serve and to share the love of Christ with others? Ask God to guide you in being a light in the darkness.

Get involved in community service or outreach programs. Use your gifts and talents to make a positive impact and to share the love of Christ with others. Look for opportunities to serve in your church, local shelters, or community centres. Be intentional about sharing your faith with others. Look for opportunities to have conversations about Jesus and to share your testimony. Be prepared to give a reason for the hope that you have and do so with gentleness and respect. Strive to be a positive influence in your workplace, school, or social circles. Let your actions and words reflect the character of Christ, demonstrating integrity, kindness, and compassion in all that you do.

Expose and Reject Darkness:

Be vigilant in rejecting the fruitless deeds of darkness and exposing them with the light of God's truth. This involves being aware of the influences and values of the world and choosing to live according to God's standards. Reflect on the areas of your life where you may be influenced by darkness. Are there habits or behaviours that need to be addressed?

Ask God to help you expose and reject darkness, living in the light of His truth. Stay informed about the cultural and societal issues that may impact your faith. Use discernment to identify areas where the values of the world conflict with God's standards. Pray for wisdom to navigate these challenges and to stand firm in your convictions.

Set boundaries that help you avoid compromising situations. This may involve limiting your exposure to certain media, avoiding specific social settings, or being cautious about the company you keep. Seek God's guidance in establishing and maintaining these boundaries. Be courageous in speaking the truth in love. When you encounter sin or injustice, address it with grace and humility. Use your voice to advocate for what is right and to shine the light of Christ in dark places.

Walk in Wisdom:

Seek to live with wisdom, making the most of every opportunity and understanding the will of the Lord. Be intentional and purposeful in your daily decisions, aligning them with God's purposes. Reflect on how you can grow in wisdom. Are there areas where you need to seek God's guidance and understanding?

Evaluate how you spend your time and make adjustments to prioritize activities that align with God's purposes. Create a schedule that includes time for prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and service. Be intentional about using your time wisely and productively. Surround yourself with wise and godly individuals who can provide guidance and support. Seek advice from mentors, pastors, or mature believers when faced with important decisions. Value their wisdom and experience as you seek to understand God's will.

Be Filled with the Spirit:

Seek to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, surrendering to His leading and depending on His power. This involves a daily commitment to walk in the Spirit and to be guided by His presence. Reflect on your relationship with the Holy Spirit. Are there areas where you need to surrender more fully to His leading? Ask God to fill you with His Spirit and to help you live a life that reflects His presence and power.

Start each day with a prayer of surrender, inviting the Holy Spirit to fill and guide you. Acknowledge your dependence on His power and seek His presence in all that you do. Cultivate a habit of listening to the Spirit's promptings and obeying His leading. Participate actively in corporate worship and fellowship. Join in singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with your church family. Let your worship be a reflection of your inner joy and gratitude to God, and encourage others to do the same.

Cultivate a Life of Worship and Thanksgiving:

Embrace a lifestyle of worship and thanksgiving, expressing your gratitude to God in all circumstances. This involves a heart that is continually focused on God and His goodness. Reflect on your daily practices of worship and thanksgiving. Are there ways you can incorporate more expressions of gratitude and praise into your life? Spend time each day giving thanks to God for His blessings and faithfulness.

Keep a journal where you record daily blessings and reasons for gratitude. Reflect on God's faithfulness and goodness in your life, and let this practice cultivate a heart of thanksgiving. Set aside time each day for personal worship. This can include singing, playing an instrument, or simply reflecting on God's attributes and expressing your love for Him. Let worship be a regular part of your routine, not just reserved for Sundays.

Develop the habit of giving thanks in all situations, both good and challenging. Recognize God's sovereignty and trust in His plans, even when circumstances are difficult. Let your attitude of gratitude be a witness to others of your faith and trust in God.

Conclusion:

In this passage, Paul challenges us to live as children of light, reflecting the character of Christ in our daily lives. We are called to imitate God's love, to cultivate purity and integrity, to live as light in a dark world, to expose and reject darkness, to walk in wisdom, to be filled with the Spirit, and to cultivate a life of worship and thanksgiving.

As we reflect on this passage, let us be inspired by Paul's exhortation and encouraged by the transformation that God has brought about in our lives. Let us seek to live in a way that reflects our new identity in Christ, contributing to the growth and health of the body of Christ and may we carry the truths of Ephesians in our hearts and live out our faith boldly and joyfully.