

Ephesians 14-09-21b

We pick up our study in Ephesians chapter 5, we are looking at the interface between darkness and light. We at least, hypothetically, allegedly, theoretically, hopefully, are light. We want to walk in the light as He is in the light so that we enjoy fellowship and the cleansing power of the blood of the Lord Jesus to sanctify us and to equip us and enable us for service.

We are light. Be light in the Lord, reflect the light. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil and to the extent that we try to walk in the light, we are going to find opposition and even active hostility in the world.

You have experienced this, I have experienced this, where even in a room full of people you feel like the odd man out, the black sheep, the disconnected one. To the extent that your values are known, your faith is known, your identity in the Lord Jesus or your views that are based on that, you are seen as not one of the group. You are intolerant, you are bigoted, you are old fashioned, you are unwise, you are benighted, you are foolish, you are not with it, you don't get it, you are part of the problem, not part of the solution.

It is the design of the world, it is the design of the prince of this world to make us feel that way. Because obviously if you can dissatisfy someone with the status quo, you can get them to change their mind and do something they shouldn't do. This is the nature of the original sin.

Why did Eve eat the fruit? She didn't just walk in there one day and say, you know, I just really think I better eat that fruit. It was an idea introduced. She was talked into being dissatisfied, talked into feeling like she was the odd person out.

You're not wise enough, eat this fruit and you'll be wise. You're just not wise. God knows if you eat this fruit, you'll be wise like him.

Eve is the original feminist. She's the original Gloria Steinem. You know, your patriarchal society here is putting you down.

God the father, Adam is the husband, you're like number three here. Eat the fruit, move up. And she looked at it and saw that it was desirable to make one wise.

You're a fool if you follow these old Hebrew myths and legends. You're a fool if you're stuck, oh, it's just, you know, your parents or somebody talking to that. Come on, join the with it crowd.

Darkness versus light. What we're looking at is, all right, if we're supposed to be light in the Lord, we're supposed to walk in the light. We're supposed to reflect the light.

We're supposed to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked, perverse generation. How do we do it? How bright do we turn up the light? When do we turn off the light, if ever? Reminds me of a line from one of Paul Simon's more recent songs. He says, if the answer, he's talking about how

can you be a Christian? How can you be a Jew? How can you be a Muslim, a Hindu, a Buddhist? How can you, how can you do this, that, and the other? But he's, he's saying everybody that makes these arbitrary commitments, you know, how can you do that unthinkingly? It's a good song.

No kidding. Paul Simon's a smart guy, but one of the things that he raises as a question in those lyrics is he says, if the answer is infinite light, why do we sleep in the dark? And without parsing all of that there, everybody recognizes that there is darkness and light. There is a border or an interface between the two.

And what this passage helps us understand is how do we define that? How do we negotiate it? How do we determine how to operate when our light comes up against darkness, when darkness begins to intrude itself into our space, which it always does and always will. We wrestle against principalities and powers and rulers of the what? Darkness of this age. We wrestle.

It's not flesh and blood. It is conceptual. It is spiritual.

And if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus, you are in a contest. You are opposed against forces of darkness. So how do we do it? Well, this you know, we left off in verse 3, fornication, uncleanness, or covetousness.

This is the opposite of putting the interests of others ahead of your own. Covetousness is putting my interests ahead of yours. You have something and I want it.

Or the dealership has something and I want it. I am interested in satisfying my desire. Young men are famous for wanting to satisfy their own desire at the expense of almost anything or anybody.

And it is resistible. It's not easy, but it is resistible and we are told to resist the impulse to satisfy our own desires. That is covetousness.

It sounds like some vast concept. It's just selfish gratification of personal desire. It is selfish.

It doesn't consider others or the impact on others, the long-term effect on others or even on ourselves. It is a short-term myopic need for gratification, covetousness. And that's why it's called idolatry.

Look, if I can, you know, turn around three times and throw wheat grains at this piece of rock and it makes my crops better, I'll do it. If I can sacrifice a sheep in front of this rock and it makes my prosperity happen quickly and more fully, then I'll do it. If I have to sacrifice my child in the belly of a brass idol and cook it live to Molech and it'll improve my prosperity, I'll do it.

That's the child of one of my third wife and I don't really like her anyway, so, you know, let's cook that child and this will ensure my prosperity. Idolatry. God sent the Israelites in to wipe out the Amorites, the Archites and the Hivites and the Hittites and all the other ites that lived in the land.

Why? Atheists love to cite this, oh, look at your God, He's a murdering God, all of these wonderful, you know, daisy-waving Amorites in the land and they were just peaceably, you know, listening to the lambs bleating in the field and the mean old Israelites came in and murdered them all. These were heinously idolatrous, depraved, child-sacrificing, you think about the Maya and the Aztec down in South America and the blood running down those ziggurats, that's the Amorite civilization that God sent the Israelites in to purge and to wipe out after warning them. They were warned.

God wrote His law on a cliff, you remember that? We studied that, God sent the Israelites in and they wrote the law on the cliff. This is why Rahab already believed in God and there were others in the land who already believed in the God of Israel when they came back. They were warned, they were given opportunity, they did not turn just like the generation watching Noah build the ark, saw, were warned and did not turn and were wiped out.

They're accountable and responsible for their actions and if you're going to keep on sacrificing children, you're going to keep on taking your young teenage daughters and forcing them into cult prostitution and boys, then you're going to be wiped out by God. It is not God's policy. God didn't send the Jews forth and say every new civilization that you find go in and wipe them out so that there will be one religion in the earth and murder everybody else.

It was a one-time pogrom against the Amorites. God didn't even send the Israelites back in to go wipe out the Egyptians that had enslaved them for decade upon decade upon decade, did He? He didn't say, behold I send you forth and I will raise up another man and he's going to go down and wipe out the Egyptians, wipe out the Moabites, wipe out... He didn't. It's a specific one-time purge of an intensely evil people.

It's like the flood. Well, we're not called to that. It is an example.

It shows God's attitude toward evil. And being recorded in the pages of Scripture, that purge is enough. Just like the flood.

I will never again destroy the earth by a flood. God never again sent the Israelites out to destroy a people. It's like the flood.

It's a one-time thing. Don't let somebody throw Israel going into the land of Canaan at you as an argument against biblical faith. They're just intensely ignorant.

It's an ignorant argument. And there's nothing more frustrating to me than to see believers, Christians, silenced by ignorant arguments. And it's just brutally ignorant.

It's so fallacious. It's like them constantly throwing up the Crusades. Go count.

There are actual counts. There are estimates of the number of people who died during the

Crusades. First of all, understand what the Crusades were, which was a reaction and backlash against an invasion and almost holocaust wipeout of people in the Holy Land.

And people heard about it and were shocked and said, we've got to stop these people. They're going in and slaying everybody, men, women, and children. We've got to go stop that.

It was a reaction, first and foremost. There would have been no Crusade if there had not been Mohammed and all of his followers in later centuries going in and deciding, as many of them think now, that they've got to wipe everybody out and establish themselves as a worldwide kingdom. Secondly, and the Inquisition and all the rest of it.

The numbers of, and by the way, the Inquisition, anytime somebody says, boo on Christianity, Inquisition, the Inquisition was not Christianity. It was Catholicism. Catholicism is not Christianity.

They are not synonymous. Genuine Christians don't believe in the Pope. They don't believe the Virgin Mary has any divine standing or power.

They don't believe in saints. They don't believe in purgatory. Catholicism is not Christianity.

Are there Christians in Catholicism? Sure. Is Catholicism and what Catholicism does in the name of the Church, capital C, have any bearing on Christianity? No. Catholicism is an aberration and a distortion and a corruption.

In the same way that Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons and a lot of others start with the Bible and then completely pervert and corrupt it, and if you're going to oppose senseless and stupid arguments that are made against Christianity, don't grant false ground for them to beat you over the head. Where in the Bible does it say anything about a Pope? Nowhere. Jesus said, let no man call you father.

That's all the Catholic Church does is have everybody call them father. They're off base from the word go. Defend biblical Christianity.

I'm not a Catholic. I'm a biblical Christian. And I'm not accountable or responsible for what Catholics did in the Inquisition or at any other time.

I'm not responsible for pedophilic priests. That's Catholicism. Show me in the Bible where any of these things are taught as the Christian faith.

Does the Christian faith teach Inquisition? And by the way, what almost nobody knows, if somebody keeps, and they just do this, it's just senseless. It's so fallacious. Somebody says, oh, Inquisition, look, your people killed, and then, of course, they've got to go back 600 or 700 years to find an example of, you know, alleged Christians allegedly murdering people.

Who was killed in the Inquisition? Just as a first round piece of factual information. Who did the

Catholics kill in the Inquisition? Catholics. Catholics.

The Inquisition, they were inquiring into people who professed Catholicism. You say, oh, they were killing Jews. You know why they were killing the Jews? Because they moved into a country and took over and were in the government and stuff, and the Jews knew that they either, it was convert, and so they did.

And they said, yeah, I'm a Catholic. Well then they didn't act like Catholics because they were really Jews, and the Catholics came and inquired into them and said, hey, you're not doing all the Catholic stuff, profess or die. And the Inquisition was not directed against unbelievers.

You know, the atheists today say, oh, you know, you Christians, you know, you go around murdering people that don't conform to your faith. They weren't going around to people that said, I ain't no Catholic. They went to people who said, I am a Catholic, and they said, you're not a good Catholic.

I kill you, basically. So get the facts straight, and don't let people win with faulty, ignorant arguments. All you have to know is one more fact than the other guy, and you win an argument.

And atheists know one more fact than almost all Christians, because Christians don't know their Bible, and they don't know their history, and it's just tragic. I've gone to debates, as you know, where, you know, here's an atheist on one side, and here's a Christian professor on another, and I just, it makes me want to stand up and just say, everybody shut up. Let me explain why the whole ground of this debate is false.

You've already granted them a false point, and now you're trying to argue you have no hope of winning, because the premise is wrong. The premise is faulty. If you do not understand the basics of logic, Christianity is a rational faith.

As I said in the first session, we don't stop at the level of the mechanical. To drive the car, you've got to be a sentient being. But it is a car that needs an engine and a steering wheel and four tires.

And don't start out not knowing which is which. Don't lay on the hood and reach over to the left front tire and try to steer the car. You have to know, because Christianity is ultimately, there's nobody more rational than God.

There's nobody that makes more sense and is more practical than God. It's not mystical. It's not goofy.

It's not emotional. It is practical. And that's what we have here.

Fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, let it not be named among you. These are policies. These are ways of behaving.

These are almost definitional. There are people who are just selfish out of the box. They are promise breakers out of the box.

They defile themselves as a pattern. Let that not be named among you. Christianity is a tolerant religion in the sense that we can be Christians and let other religions and people who have no religion dwell in us, around us, all over the place, and be totally happy.

We're not Muslim terrorists. We don't say, I don't like the fact that your women don't put a bag on their head. Therefore, I'm going to cut your head off.

Tolerant. But within the fellowship, and that is within the body of the local assembly and within the periphery of individual believers, we have a responsibility for discernment. Some people are in and others are out.

A local fellowship does not countenance for long someone who actively embraces an evil, overt lifestyle. These things are visible. Covetousness and acquisitiveness that comes out as idolatry, when he says it is idolatry, what does that mean? Do you know if somebody worships an idol? I know that the household of King Saul was idolatrous, even though he was commissioned by God and Samuel was around and all the rest of it.

I know they were idolatrous. Do you know how I know that? What happened when David had to flee? How did his first wife, Michael, cover his escape? She took a household idol and laid it in David's bed, and because David was such a gloriously hairy man, she put goat hair on the head of the household idol, and when they came in, she said, he's asleep, don't wake him. And they looked at this goat hair and said, that's David, all right, and then they let him be.

What's a taraf? They had teraphim in the household of Saul, and she grabbed one and laid it in the bed. It's a life-size idol. Well, that's overt.

You can see that. It's one thing to be desirous and covetous and say, boy, I really wish I had a fill-in-the-blank here in your heart. It's something else if it is visible and known to others.

You're just acquisitive by nature. You're Donald Trump, I've got to build another tower by nature. It's overt.

It's known. Let it not be named. Let it not be visible in your midst.

And somebody who's just that acquisitive and that selfish, there's going to be an invitation to exit, stage left. Same thing in our personal periphery. You cannot cultivate, you cannot maintain relationships with people that are intentionally prosecuting a lifestyle of evil.

They embrace it. They have no intention of turning from it. They think it's fine.

They think there's something wrong with you for believing otherwise. You start to put distance.

That's what this means.

Let it not be named among you as is proper for set-apart ones, sanctified ones. Now he's going to go on and describe this. Neither filthiness, foolish talking, coarse jesting, which are not fitting, are not suitable, are not proper.

Would the Lord Jesus Christ be comfortable listening to this innuendo-filled conversation, this jesting about things that you hear not only on the television but in the commercials on television and on the radio, and in between you're trying to listen to music, in between there is coarse jesting and there is this constant drag down into the muck of the world. Turn it off. That's in your periphery.

That is let it not be named among you. Somebody gets in your car because you took it to the mechanic, they turn on the radio, they're not going to hear that stuff coming out of your radio because you don't tune to those stations. I take you off of my memorized list when Bo and Jim or whoever it is, I heard some of the worst filth in my life.

My radio has got a problem and I couldn't turn it off at some station. I heard something I've never heard before and I will never hear again. I can't believe people used to get fired from the radio for letting one expletive leave their mouth.

These guys... Look, I was a Marine and I find it deeply offensive, the stuff coming out my radio, yuck, yuck, yuck, isn't that funny? No, it's not funny, it's offensive. It is coarse, it is denigrating, it is just dismally foul. I would just as soon take some rotten thing that got left in the back of the refrigerator, open the lid and smear it all over my dashboard and smell it all the way to work as I would to listen to some of the stuff that comes out the radio or comes out the television.

Let it not be named among you. Clean up your personal space is what this says because the good apple doesn't turn the barrel of bad apples good. One bad apple will turn all the barrel of good apples bad.

That's how it works. So purge the stuff out. Don't let it be foul your mind.

Instead, be grateful. One of the things you'll notice is there's never any gratitude, there's never any respect and appreciation for what God has done and for what God is in these things. They are always opposite.

Just think Bill Maher and you'll get the picture. For this you know that no pornos, nobody who in the spiritual realm crosses these lines and makes these compromises and breaks these covenants, no unclean person, this is unclean, this isn't I've gotten myself besmirched and now I am cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ. You don't go for cleansing.

Don't walk in the light so that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you from all sin. I'm really okay with this. I'm going to do this and I'm going to do it as a pattern and I'm going to make no effort to

clean it up.

I'm going to make no effort to acknowledge that it is wrong, homologeo, confess this is not right, confession followed by change of mind. You don't do that. Nobody that does that, nobody who is constantly pursuing their own agenda and their own desires, covetousness, which is idolatry, has any inheritance.

You're not looking ahead. We talked Friday night about the nature of the bow versus the sword. The bow shot the arrow, you're aiming at a distance.

You're looking long range. You're taking care of things at a distance. Well, if you're not thinking ahead as a believer, it's not just about the present.

It is primarily about the future. Our lives right now are primarily, primarily not about evangelism, not about social action, not about emotional comfort, not about immediate prosperity or satisfaction. Our lives are primarily, mostly, fundamentally about the future.

Learn the song of the bow. Learn the song of the bow. Learn to think ahead.

Lift up your eyes to the hills. Don't be caught up in what's immediately in front of you. Anybody, can you imagine driving and you can only see 20 feet? Go down central and you can't see beyond 20 feet.

When there's rain or fog or visibility problems, what does everybody do? You start getting real careful and driving real slowly and carefully because you can't see, right? Why would you live your life at 90 miles an hour only looking 20 feet ahead? You know the outcome of that. It is destruction. That's what this says.

Nobody who does these things, no one who is oblivious to commitments, that's what pornos is, pornaya. It is disrespecting commitments, promises, covenants, obligations. Nobody that way, nobody who is comfortable in filth, nobody who is personally pursuing their desires as a pattern has any inheritance in the kingdom of God and Christ.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, balloon words, looks big but it has no substance. Because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Sons characterized by disobedience.

It's talking about the realm of believers. Therefore do not be partakers with them, do not be inheritors with them. What did Jesus say about the guy that came in and didn't have the robe of righteousness to be in at the wedding feast? What did He say about the unjust servant? Cut him in two and apportion him his partaking, his lot, his inheritance with the hypocrites.

The hypocrites are outside the city, outside the New Jerusalem, in the relative dark, weeping, wailing, gnashing their teeth, roasting borrowed marshmallows over the fire that is consuming

their inheritance. This is the second death. The second death is not mysterious.

The second death is everything that gets thrown into the lake of fire. And your inheritance, eternal inheritance, this is not fixable, there is no do-over for this. Eternal inheritance in the lake of fire.

Read Revelation 2 and 3. Read Revelation 20 and 21 and 22. Everything that is coming up in the future, the Kingdom of Christ and God. Live intentionally looking ahead.

For you were once darkness, does this make sense now? You were once darkness, you were unable to see what was ahead. You stumble, you bark your shins on nearby things because you can't see. You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light. This makes perfect sense with that context, doesn't it? Do you know what it means to walk as a child of light? Not a son of disobedient. Not a far-off child, a prodigal son.

But as dear children, doing what you have seen God do. You see that recurrence of you're a child. You're supposed to be respecting your Father.

You're supposed to be living in a way that pleases Him. You are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth. Remember the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians? What is the fruit of the Spirit? Love, joy. Our special music today was an ode to joy.

An appreciation for joy. Why would you live the selfish life? Why would you live the pornos, akatharsia, covetous, idolatrous life? Why do people do that? What are they looking for? Joy. Do they find it? Ask Joe Walsh sometime.

He had all the money and all the opportunity to pursue every avenue of personal pleasure that there is. And he is now a believer. And he will tell you, although he's quiet about his coming to Christ, but he is not quiet about recognizing that that was a dead end.

He and many others like him, you can think of many examples, the survivors, the ones that didn't die in the process, have come out the other side saying, you know, I've been there and there's nothing there. There is no joy. It is a slavery.

It is a chain. It is a prison cell of darkness. And to come out the other side and be liberated is a great blessing.

Walk as children of light. This is where the fruit of the Spirit is, love, joy, peace, and all the rest. Goodness, righteousness, and truth.

These are things that last. These are things you take with you. These are things that become incorporated into us and they never leave.

Kingdom of God and of Christ. Inheritance. They are the keys to the treasure chest of genuine inheritance.

And even that inheritance isn't a selfish desire. That inheritance enables us to serve, enables us to reflect the glory of God. That's really what it's for.

Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. That really sums it up, doesn't it? Is it acceptable to me or is it acceptable to the Lord? And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. No fellowship.

How do you know if it's a work of darkness? Well, you know, it doesn't seem to be that bad. Is it fruitful? It doesn't say have no fellowship with the works of darkness. It says the unfruitful works of darkness.

Can you look at something that really has no bearing on spiritual life? It takes time. It takes energy. It involves other people.

And there's no fruit. Does it in any way? I mean, even hard work. You can go mow your lawn.

You can do dishes. You can fold laundry. You can fix your car.

You can do maintenance. You can do a lot of things. And when you do it as unto the Lord, you say, I am doing the work of my hands.

Six days, shew thou labor and do all thy work. I am doing things. And the fruit is in the attitude with which I do it.

I can do this as unto the Lord. I can clean this house unto the Lord. I can do this chore.

I can do this function. I can render this service to my family or to somebody in my profession or even in my obligations as a student or whatever it might be. I can do this as unto the Lord.

I can do this as though the Lord asked me, would you please do this thing? Now, can you think of something in your life on which you spend time, in which you invest and perhaps even participate with others, that there is no way you can angle that, there's no way you can invest it with spiritual value. There's no way it can produce fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. There's just nothing there.

It's just a pastime with two S's. It's just a pastime. Can I watch the 111th episode of some series, some formulaic thing on television as unto the Lord? Well, if the Lord had asked me to watch this show, could I? You know, there are certain things you really start to question.

God has given me precious time. It's like golden shekels being handed to us, talents of silver or

gold handed to us. What am I doing with them? Look, entertainment is fine, but limited and hopefully invested with.

Now, you know, one way you can redeem that sort of thing is what if you do it as a family and then talk about the values that were or were not reflected. Make judgments about where something did or didn't go wrong. Literature is great.

Entertainment is great. Dramatic, thematic stuff is great. I don't think I can get that out of like Bionicles or Transformers or, you know, something that's just purely a flight of imagination to see how far I can press the limits of my CGI software.

And wow, look at that. I invented a whole planet and look, it's all crawling with mechanical spiders. And I personally, maybe there's people that can.

I can't get any fruit out of that. I can't put any fruit in it. It's barren soil.

Nothing will grow in it in my soul. If you can, God bless you. But this is the definition.

This is the criteria. If it is unfruitful, get rid of it. We are here to bear fruit.

Jesus told the disciples this in the upper room. I am the vine. You are the branches.

Your job is to abide in me and bear fruit. My father will prune you so that you can bear more fruit. This is why we're here.

I have a choice between preparing myself, investing myself, learning history. Look, take the time instead of watching the, you know, 111th episode, read a book. Find something that adds to your frame of reference in interpretation of current events or of history or of situations.

Read biographies and where people did or didn't go wrong. Give yourself exercise and practice in application. Wrong decision? Why? Good decision? Why? Bad policy? Good policy? Believe or should or shouldn't have stepped up? Exercise, training, fruit.

Unfruitful work of darkness, we are to, it says, expose them. This word expose is very interesting. And you may have a, if you've got a New King James, I think you have a text notes there that says reprove.

This is elenco, E-L-E-G-C-H-O, actually, elenco. It winds up almost having an N sound. Elenco.

And what does it mean to expose it? Are we to call it out? You know, witch, witch. People pointing and, you know, grabbing the torch. What does it signify here? Well, this is a word that means to, in Homeric Greek, it meant to scorn or to bring into contempt.

This is, you walk into the house and you smell a funny smell. I know this probably didn't happen to anybody but us. You open the door and you say, what is that? And you start going around

trying to figure out there's something amiss here.

This isn't the wonderful fragrance our house usually has or something. And upon investigation, you open the kitchen trash and find that something that had gone bad has gone worse. You know, there's a chicken leg in there that somebody forgot or a pet has left behind some gift somewhere.

Or, you know, something, a little dead animal has been brought in by one of your pets. But you keep looking around and you eventually say, oh, I forgot I put this laundry in the washing machine. I used to do this when I was single.

You know, I'd put in a load of laundry in the summertime and go off and forget about it. Because when you're single, you only do laundry like once a month or so. And I'd come in several days later and I'd be like, oh, and I'd look all around the house and eventually open up the washer and it had soured.

Everything had gone sour in there. And it didn't happen often, but it happened enough to provide an illustration. But this is what elenco means.

Something's wrong. Figure out where it is. Find out where it is and fix it.

Expose it so that you can fix it. This isn't right. Something's in the garbage disposal and you didn't hit the switch and we were gone for a day.

We went away for the weekend, came back. Oh, wow. Turn that thing on.

Fix it. Expose it. You realize that.

And this is expose something negative. Something's wrong. You've got to hunt around and investigate.

Find it. And that's why you have the combination of expose and rebuke here. It has the idea of you find it and you purge it out.

You fix it. You get rid of it. You don't just go on for days saying, boy, you know, our house used to smell good.

Now it just smells like a dead chicken leg for some reason. Who knows what it could be? No, you find it and fix it. That's elenco in a nutshell.

Now, listen. In our lives, if we do not have enthusiasm, if we do not have peace, if we do not have the capacity for love and putting the interests of others ahead of our own. If there is an easy turn into rancor and bitterness, if our temper is quick, if our impatience is short, something smells.

There's something in the environment that needs to be found and fixed. This is the fruit of the

Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is in righteousness, goodness, and truth.

Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. Humility. Love.

If you love the Lord your God, this isn't a gooey sort of, oh, Lord, you know, I have this big emotion for you. Love is a policy, right? Sacrificial towards self, beneficial toward the object of love. And, of course, it's somewhat hubris to say that we can benefit God, but we can certainly respect God and respond to his love.

We love because he first loved us. And our love for God, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength, means when it comes to your heart, you put God first. When it comes to your soul, you put God first.

When it comes to your strength, your efforts, your investment of time, you put God first. That's loving God. You don't have to have a single gooey emotion about God at all.

It is a matter of priority. It is a matter of function. It is a matter of how am I investing my time.

If I spend all day long doing other stuff, and I come to the evening, and I turn on the tube, and I watch three or four episodes of three or four favorite shows, and I have not spent one minute in prayer, I've not spent one minute in remembering what I learned in Bible class, and thinking about it, and does it have any pertinence to what's going on in my life today, you do not love God. You don't. Don't kid yourself.

Put away the deception and start thinking truth. If you're investing your time and setting your priorities in a godless manner, you don't love God. Just drop the deception.

Quit deceiving ourselves. If you love God, just like anybody else you love, if you love somebody, you make time for them. It's their birthday, you get a card, you get a gift, you call them up, you spend some time.

If you love someone, you communicate with them. If you're dating someone, you make time for them. They fit into your plans.

You know, I want to spend some time with this person I love. That's true no matter how long you've been married, no matter how long you've dwelt in a family. If you love your family, you spend time with them.

And it is a priority that you don't go long without spending time with them, because you love them. You invest. You will put aside your schedule in the interest of cultivating and maintaining and enhancing that relationship, right? Well, do you love God? If you don't, just say so, because your life says so.

If you do, you will find that you can't go very long without dropping everything and saying, I've got

to go back to the oasis. I want to get some alone time with my God. Crack open my Bible.

Read a psalm. Get the notes I took or try to remember back to what I heard in Bible class the last time or last two times. Think about it.

Meditate on it. Offer it back up to God in prayer. What do we have that we did not receive? David says, I will not make a sacrifice out of that which cost me nothing.

If you invest time in Bible class, take that as your offering and your sacrifice back to God. The incense of prayers is an acceptable, sweet-smelling savor. Pray back what you learned in Bible class.

Lord, thank you that you have given me the privilege of living in the light. Thank you that the Lord Jesus Christ sits at your right hand. Thank you that there is a kingdom of God and of Christ coming.

Thank you that you have kept me alive this long so that I can take my time and invest it. Thank you. Thankfulness.

Not pōrnia, not akatharsia, not covetousness, but rather giving of thanks. If you love God, you will find yourself on your knees being thankful. If you don't find yourself being thankful, just don't kid yourself.

Be honest. We should at least be honest with ourselves, shouldn't we? If that never happens, if it's just not a priority, it just doesn't occur, you don't love God. So quit walking around acting like you're a Christian.

Quit going to Bible class. Quit lugging a Bible around. Don't do the facade.

If you don't love God, then just live your life as unto yourself and be at least not hypocritical. One thing about an atheist, they're not hypocrites. They have that going for them and that's about it.

But a hypocritical Christian is worse than being no Christian at all. Unfruitfulness. Walk as children of light.

Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. Have no fellowship with unfruitful works. Don't engage in them yourself and don't hang around with people who do.

Now, if there is fruitfulness and unfruitfulness at issue, this isn't talking about unbelievers. This is talking about believers. Refine your friendships and your time spent with people to people who care about the Lord.

Distance yourself from unfruitful works of darkness. It is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. All things that are exposed, same word, this is a variation of elenco here, all things that are found out as the smell in the house, that are identified as that

which is causing the stench, it may be done in secret, it may be in the wastebasket, it may be down the garbage disposal, it may be hidden under a piece of furniture, but it stinks.

Find it, identify it, and eliminate it. Now, how practical is this? Is this pie in the sky by and by, love everybody, praise Jesus? No. Look around in our lives.

This is a command of Scripture. We need to look today. We need to look this afternoon.

Evaluate ourselves and see if we are walking in the faith. Ask ourselves some hard questions. Do I love God? Not the paper answer, not the superficial answer.

Let me just review the way I've been spending my time these last several days. Who do I love? What do I love? Where you spend your time is what you love. And how you spend that time.

You can be doing mundane things, but with what attitude? With what goal? To what purpose? Do I do it as under the Lord? You know, this is just laundry, but if it was the Lord's laundry, how good a job would I do? It's just a floor, but if I'm cleaning the floor, building the floor, doing whatever I'm doing to the floor, if this was the Lord's floor, how hard would I work? How well would I do it? That's the way I'm doing it. As unto the Lord. That's love for God, thinking about Him.

You can be doing mundane things in love. Or you can be doing mundane things, and they are truly mundane. They are unfruitful works of darkness.

All of us are living a life. All of us can sit down this afternoon and do an analysis and say, Who or what do I really love? If it doesn't come up to the standard of walking in the light and being fruitful, fruit of the Spirit, which Paul helpfully tells us is goodness, righteousness, and truth. It doesn't partake of the light.

It partakes of truth. Well, if it doesn't come up to snuff, what needs to happen? Change of mind away from dead works, Hebrews 11. Let us go on, not laying again the foundation of change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God.

Change of mind. Not too late. We're all still breathing air.

God has left us here. We can change. We can refine our priorities.

Maybe we're doing this to some extent, but not enough. Do you just sort of semi-love your husband or your wife or your mother or your child? Or do you really love them? Well, you know, I do kind of an adequate job. If you really love them, maybe you ought to love them more.

Maybe it ought to be more overtive, ought to be more evident. There ought to be a little more sacrifice involved. There ought to be more offering involved.

We need to evaluate where we stand, how we love, who we love, and make sure that our lives

live up to our fantasy, our mental, what we tell ourselves. We tell ourselves lies all the time. Put away the lie.

Live in the truth. It is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. All things that are exposed, that are found out, identified, brought to light, are made manifest by the light.

That's why we're in Bible class. We might not have been thinking about this yesterday, but we have been in the Word of God, and the Word of God has shined this light. Now we know.

Now we've got resources. Now we've got a plan of attack. We've got something we can do.

And it is because the light of God's Word has shined on this. James says, you can look into the perfect law of liberty like a mirror, and walk away and do nothing. Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only, as the manner of some is, as the manner of many is.

Therefore, he says, awake you who sleep. Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. The Lord Jesus is waiting to give us light.

He is knocking on the door, wanting to come in. He is the light. He was the light that came into the world.

He is the light of the world. If you want light, if you want the presence and power of the Lord Jesus, then do it. Awake.

Isn't this interesting? This is my closing thought here, by the way. Awake you who sleep, and arise from the dead. Calvinist view says, well, you know, if you're dead, then God has to pretty much put the decision in you.

He's got to predestine you. He's got to elect you. It's an effectual calling.

When God calls you, you have to answer, because he's basically pulling the puppet string, and he's pulling the ring inside the mannequin's head, and the ventriloquist doll speaks. God's basically just putting on a puppet show. No.

Notice, Jesus spoke to Lazarus when he was dead, and he obeyed. There's a dead Lazarus, been dead four days. He's cold and moldy.

Jesus said, Lazarus, come forth. And when the Lord speaks, even the dead have the ability to respond. That's how powerful the Word of God is.

The Word of God can hit something dead, and it will come to life and respond if it chooses. Awake, you who sleep. Arise from the dead.

God told Ezekiel, prophesy to these bones, talk to this dust. Ezekiel prophesied, and the dust

responded and stood on his feet and became a living army after he did it a couple of times. Arise, and Christ will give you light.

We have the opportunity to do this. We need to respond and pay attention. But this is very practical.

We need to evaluate. It is not enough to be passive. We've got to actively cultivate light and separate from darkness.

And this gives us all of the criteria, all of the means on how to do it. How do you know if something is fruitful or not? Just look. Jesus walked up to the fig tree.

Are there figs or not? It's not that hard. Investment of time. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the doctrine and the reproof and the correction and the instruction in righteousness that it provides for us. Every word is inspired by Your power, by Your purpose.

God the Holy Spirit enables us to understand it in ways that unbelievers never can. We pray that as we reflect on these truths, that You will give us the grace and the perception to see where we can improve. There are always places in our lives where we are doing well and other places where we are not.

And our goal, individually and collectively, is to live in a way that pleases You and that reflects the glory of the Lord Jesus. We know that these instructions from Your Word help us do that. And we pray that in the hours and days that lie ahead, we can fulfill this calling, we can accomplish this purpose, and we can be found not just acceptable in Your sight, but we can bear that positive fruit of righteousness that qualifies us for future service and future inheritance in the Kingdom of God and of Christ.

We thank You for the Lord Jesus and for these opportunities and these enablements. In Jesus' name, amen.