

Ephesians 14-10-05a

This is Sunday, 5 October 2014. We continue our study in Paul's letter to the Laodicean church, popularly known as the book of Ephesians. We are in chapter 5, and this morning we will cover verses 15 through 21.

Ephesians 5, 15 through 21. Let's take a moment to prepare ourselves for investigating God's Word together by going to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you for this opportunity to gather, to spend time in fellowship.

It's such a privilege to mingle in a group of people who share appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ, enthusiasm for the plan and purpose that you have included us in through Him to be refreshed and renewed and restored by contact with one another, and most of all with you through your Word and through your Spirit. We thank you for the privilege of worship. We thank you for the privileges that pertain to our priesthood, giving us access to you directly, giving us the standing that belongs to the Lord Jesus, being in Him.

We have so many wonderful appurtenances and attendant blessings. We pray that as we look at your Word together this morning, that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart so that as we negotiate the challenges and circumstances, the decisions and actions coming up in the next few days and weeks, that these things will be real to us, they will illuminate our path, and enable us to live a life that is pleasing in your sight, that reflects your glory, and redounds to the praise of the Lord Jesus Christ who died to make all of these things possible for us. We pray it in His name, Amen.

Ephesians chapter 5 began by calling us to do what we have seen God do, and we know the context of that. We can't create universes. We can't embark on fostering worlds full of life and designing the sophisticated hardware and software that comprises living nature around us.

How can we do what we have seen God do? This is in the context of interpersonal relationships. This is with whom do we maintain close fellowship and contact? How and when do we place a distance between ourselves and others? That is the theme of this chapter. How do we know when and where to associate? How do we know when and where to disassociate? It's exceedingly important because bad company corrupts good morals.

If we embrace those we should not embrace, if we continue contact and fellowship with those we should not contact and fellowship with, it will harm us. It interferes with God's plans and purposes in this age. Our light is not going to shine like it should in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation because we have become in some way a part of the crooked and perverse generation.

This chapter is all practical application based on what was given to us in the first four chapters. We are in Him. You think about John's expression of this truth from a different angle in chapter

one of his first epistle, 1 John 1. If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship, that's what we're talking about, fellowship, productive contact and interaction with one another.

That one another is us with the Lord and the Lord with us. By extension if you are walking in the light and I am walking in the light then our contact with each other on the human level is also going to be beneficial, productive, uplifting, encouraging, what the Bible calls edifying, building an edifice, building a structure that will last, will stand the test. So John says walk in the light as he is in the light, all in the present tense.

If we keep on walking in the light because he keeps on being in the light, we keep on having fellowship, he with us and we with him and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, keeps on cleansing us from all sin. The reverse of that, the concomitant truth, the parallel is if we are not consistently walking in the light we are distancing ourselves from he who constantly dwells in the light and we will not have fellowship, we will not have that relationship with God that we should have through Christ and guess what? The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, will not keep on cleansing us from all sin. In years gone by there was such an appreciation initially for the truth of 1 John 1.9, if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

There was a faction within the church and people who took that verse out of its context and treated it as a mechanical thing, well whatever sin I commit all I have to do is name it homo logeo and I'll be forgiven and cleansed. Nothing could be further from the truth. If we are cavalier about sin and we say, well it's not such a big deal, Jesus died for it, it's already paid for, all I have to do is name it and the last lingering effects are gone, I just confess my sin and I actually talked to people who took this so mechanically that they would anticipate a sin in advance, willfully committing it with the promise to themselves that they would confess it afterward and everything would be fine.

Taking the grace of God as a license to sin, well I'll cut the body of Christ and just put the confession band-aid on it right afterward and it will heal right up. Making a travesty and a mockery out of the Word of God. God does not take that kind of thing lightly.

We are enjoined, we are commanded, we are exhorted constantly to be those who dwell in the light. Well chapter 5 of Ephesians, this is the how-to. The principle is expressed beautifully in 1 John 1, keep on walking in the light.

Well what are the things that could knock us out of walking in the light? Well one another, in the same way that one another can be edifying, that love can be an encouragement, that speaking the truth to one another, songs and hymns and spiritual songs is coming up here. In the same way that that can be an up-building, edifying fellowship, illicit contact, maintaining fellowship with that that we should not be associated with has the reverse effect. You are not your own, you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, in your daily life.

Our mission is not to please ourselves, our mission is to please God. Well sometimes because it is easier, and it is easy, because it is lazy, and it is lazy, to not evaluate associations and contact that we have, we end up violating the instructions that are given to us, clearly so, here in Ephesians chapter 5 on what we should break contact with, what we should place at a distance. Be aware that this does three things.

Because we are body of Christ, you remember all of the emphasis on the body that has been in this chapter, because we are in Christ, when we make this kind of decision, when we follow this kind of policy, here is what happens. We say, well, it is just me, you know, at worst all, you know, God will be unhappy with me. No.

You directly affect the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we are in. We are in Him, and when we do things, it reflects on the Lord Jesus Christ. It has to.

This is why there is the constant argument, and often it is fallacious, but I will give you sort of a harmless example from days gone by. It used to be, especially in the wake of the Vietnam War, there would be a guy getting up in the tower at a college campus with a rifle and picking people off. You remember this happened here in Texas down south, that somebody got up in the tower and started picking people off.

Every headline, every story began with ex-Marine killing people on the campus. Ex-Marine, ex-Marine, ex-Marine. Because it was immediately an association.

If he wasn't an ex-Marine, he wouldn't be up there shooting people with a rifle. The Marine Corps trained him. The Marine Corps taught him how to shoot.

He's got what they now call PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder or something. It was being a Marine that made him what he is. And so he's forever associated as an ex-Marine, you know, sniping and murdering people from on high.

Well, this became sort of a habit with the press. And so anytime somebody committed a violent act, anytime there was a shooting, they would look into the guy's background, oh, he was a Marine. Lee Harvey Oswald was a Marine, you know, he was a lousy shot when he was a Marine.

But apparently this was the defining thing. What does this mean? When we malfunction, rightly or wrongly, it is going to be associated with our Christian faith. People know, or they should, that we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the decisions that we make, the policies we follow, and the associations that we cultivate reflect on the Lord Jesus. They cannot help but do so unless you are such a closet Christian that nobody knows you are. So do what you have seen God doing as dear children.

Children grow up in a household and learn an enormous amount from their parents. Very often follow in their parents' footsteps. There is often a family tradition in business.

If your parents are ranchers and have raised cattle, that's what you learn. That's what you know. You're familiar with it.

You come to appreciate it. You see it from the inside, and you take over and do that as a child. Your parents are in some particular type of employment, and you see it, and you know it, and you're comfortable with it, and you have the chance to appreciate it.

And many times, it will be Sanford and Son, or Furniture Movers and Sons, and you grow up within and take after that because it's what you know and what you come to appreciate by exposure, values, political attitudes, social skills, and the way that we negotiate. Some people negotiate their way through social life with humor, and they learn the type of humor that they use. Is it a dry wit? Is it more of an overt? Even the kind of humor that you come to appreciate and that you learn to express often comes from your family life, like father, like son, like parent, like children, like mother, like daughter.

Well, that's the principle here. As dear children, as beloved children who appreciate the Father and His mercy and His grace, but also His uncompromising righteousness, His absolute justice, His refusal to be contaminated or corrupted by sin or evil, we appreciate that about our Father, and we go and do likewise as beloved children do the same thing. Well, we've worked our way through this chapter, and we have seen that our inheritance as children depends on this.

We are dear children, but it is the child who captures the Father's heart that is the inheritor. It is the one that He wants to pass on His wealth and His substance to that is going to inherit because like-mindedness, like-heartedness. That's why Paul says in verse 5, no fornicator, no unclean person, no covetous man who is an idolater has any inheritance, any inheritance in the Kingdom of God, inheritance.

The future in terms of opportunity, in terms of service, in terms of reflecting the glory of the God who saved us and the Lord Jesus who died for us, depends on how closely we follow the Father's pattern in associating ourselves with the light, walking in the light, disassociating ourselves from darkness, and eschewing the works of darkness. Men love darkness rather than light, why? Say it out loud. Men love darkness rather than light, why? Because their deeds are evil, because their deeds are evil.

This is why Paul goes on down to say, verse 11, have no fellowship. He doesn't say limited fellowship. He doesn't say careful fellowship, tiptoeing through the cow pile fellowship.

He says have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of what? Darkness. But rather expose, and we were looking at this word *elencho*, which doesn't just mean expose like write an expose, you know, tell it around like gossip. This is the idea of illumination.

Be the light that is a contrast to this darkness. Light is what reveals what cannot be seen. I was trying to read a little label underneath a car, you know, there's these little things that tell you specifications and so on.

Well, I can't, my eyes don't focus like they used to if the light is not strong. When there's strong light, I can see as well as I could ever see since I was a baby. But when the light starts getting dim, everything just gets kind of like a fog.

So what do you do in a situation like that? You want to read something you can't read it? Go grab a flashlight. Went and got the flashlight, put the flashlight on it. Suddenly it's sharp.

Suddenly it's clear. The light makes clear what darkness obscures. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather be the light that shows what is what.

Walk as children of light. It is shameful to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. You don't have to wait until it's some obvious faux pas, some obvious case of embezzlement or some obvious case of malfeasance or some overt criminal act.

If you have fellowship, if you have close fellowship and you know that there are things that are being, you find out by that fellowship things that are generally secret, right? You don't have to say, well, nobody knows that this person is cheating on their spouse. Nobody knows that this person is embezzling or cheating their employer. Nobody knows that they're allegedly out on deliveries, but they're really parking under a tree and sleeping.

Nobody knows that there is this evil going on, whatever it may be. It's not commonly known, so it's okay for me to associate, and only if they get outed, only if it hits the press, then I'll distance myself. It's too late.

Notice that these are things done by them in secret. Things done by them in secret, but you come to know this because you have that level of association, that level of contact, that level of friendship or fellowship, and you become aware that there's something bad going on here. This can happen in a business.

It has happened. Some of us have had experience where, because you're in sort of the intimate levels at which a business operates, you find out that there's some big-time lack of integrity being expressed. Well, that is a time to place distance, and it doesn't mean I'm going to the papers, I'm going to put up a big sign, I'm going to pick it outside and say, these guys are cheaters.

These guys are tax frauds. These guys are stealing or whatever. It means be the light.

That's why I don't think expose is the best translation here. In that situation, you've got to continue to shine as a light. When you depart and put distance between yourself and say, I cannot stay here, I cannot continue association here, that act by itself is a statement, and it is an opportunity

for God to convict and for God to communicate to anybody who is still in the darkness, because if everybody agrees and everybody goes along as if there's nothing wrong, how is any light ever going to come into that situation? We are the light, and if we don't shine, then the crooked and perverse is the norm, and nobody raises an objection.

Many times it is when somebody finally speaks, when somebody says, I'm sorry, but I'm leaving. This can be tacky talk, and many times people are operating on the assumption that, well, what we're doing must be okay, because nobody is objecting. It is the point that somebody stands up and leaves.

It is the point that someone refrains and doesn't participate. It's the point at which somebody begins to put distance. Those who are on the fence, those who are susceptible to change of mind and to progress in the right direction, have an opportunity to see an example of somebody who is standing for their faith, who has integrity, who is willing to shine as a light, and this can be your unspoken, in some cases, witness.

Heaven forbid we should miss that opportunity to be God's agent for change, God's agent for salvation, God's agent for progress and deliverance and blessing in a situation. God places us there, we fail, and He's got to use some other means. He couldn't rely on us.

We were the chisel. He was going to carve out this beautiful part of His work, and our point broke. Our edge dulled.

We could not be used, and God has to do it another way, because we failed. We didn't have the integrity to hold an edge and do what we needed to do, to be the light. Have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather be the light.

And it's our judgment on what that entails. Do you speak or do you not? Pray and ask God for wisdom. It will be given to you in that hour what you should say.

Notice sometimes when they were accusing the Lord Jesus, He said nothing. Other times He engaged in dialogue. How did He know when to be like a lamb to the slaughter, silent? And how did He know when to speak and to have a conversation with Pilate? How did He know? That's the Spirit of God.

That's the presence of God's Word in our souls. As God told Moses, I will be with your mouth. I will teach you what you should say, if anything.

And Moses keeps, you know, dissembling, and, oh, I'm slow speech and have a slow tongue. God says, I'll give you Aaron. Well, Aaron gets to say like one five-word speech, and after that, it's all Moses.

Turns out Moses really was able to speak as God gave him ability and the words. And it's the same with us. Sometimes it's just a matter of departing and saying nothing.

You fold your tents and steal silently away in the desert, like Ahab the Arab. See that, I bet they don't even play that on the radio anymore because I've just said something horribly politically incorrect. Ahab, the desert dwelling, I don't know what you could say that would be politically correct.

I'm not versed in that. But sometimes it's time to just steal silently away, just leave. Other times, you know, if anyone asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, and you say, I've got to keep my light shining here.

I can't be a part of this. Here's why. Especially if we're asked.

If anyone asks, you'd better have a cogent reason. That is your witness. That is your opportunity to be the light.

Have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. Really two categories there. There's a big category.

There's a continent called works of darkness, right? So why didn't he say just have no contact with works of darkness? He says unfruitful works of darkness. On the continent, there is a smaller region where these works are not just classified as evil, but they are evil because they are unfruitful. All things are lawful.

Not all things are edifying. Some things are a work of darkness, not because they partake of overt evil, but because they are unfruitful. They chew time.

They chew opportunity. They deflect and distract and prevent fruit. If you're trying to grow a particular kind of fruit that needs sunshine and you let a mighty oak grow and it gets taller and leafier than your fruit tree, there's nothing intrinsically wrong with an oak.

But if it renders your fruit tree unfruitful, the oak has to go. There may be nothing intrinsically wrong with some of the things that we spend our time on, but if they render us unfruitful, that makes them a work of darkness. You see the point? The reason unfruitful is in there is, anything that interferes with fruit becomes a work of darkness, even though its objective definition may not be so.

No fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, unfruitful. It is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. Notice, done by them.

This is things that people are doing, things that people are a part of, and we have to distance ourselves from these people because of shameful things that are done in secret. They're not overt necessarily. They're not widely known necessarily, but we come to know it, and because of this unfruitful work done by them in secret that is shameful, we are commanded to put distance between.

You don't have to be ugly, you shouldn't be holier than thou, but who are you? Are you somebody who loves God and wants to live to please Him? Then when something like this comes up, you push that away. Be the light. That is the opportunity for those people to say, why is this person putting distance? Why do they no longer spend time? Why are we not the old buddies that we used to be? They'll either ask or they'll figure it out.

Well, you know, he is a Christian, and I'm doing a thing that the Bible forbids. That's no doubt it. And that's an opportunity for God the Holy Spirit to work in them, and wouldn't it be great if that was the occasion and the turning point for that person to join us in the light instead of us deciding to join them in the darkness? It creates opportunity.

It creates potential. It's something God can use in someone's life, and it has happened over and over and over again, where people have recognized through disassociation that they were in a bad place, and they have decided, you know, I always felt there was something amiss here. I need to get this fixed.

It creates opportunity. And how much better for someone to come and join us in the light than for us to remain in the darkness? All things that are illuminated, all things that are illuminated, the light of God's Word, the light of the presence of God's people, are made manifest. Things that are illuminated are made clear.

It creates a decision point. It creates potential, opportunity. Let the light shine on a thing and show it for what it is.

I had a rumbling noise in my car. When I get up to a certain speed, I heard this roaring noise. I didn't know what it was.

I knew it was bad. It was bad enough to make me stop a trip and turn around and wait a day and take a different car, because this noise was disturbing. But I didn't know what it was.

Well, to find out what it is, and I did, gives me the chance to fix it. I don't just have to leave the car sitting and say, well, I just don't know, but I've just got to... It's not enough to simply say, I'm not going to use the car because there's some non-illuminated problem. Illuminate the situation.

Find the truth. Now there's the potential and the opportunity to fix it. All things that are illuminated, are brought to light, are made manifest by the light.

Now it's clear. Now it can be addressed. Now it can be remedied.

It can be dealt with. Many of these things are going to continue to fester. It's like a boil that doesn't get lanced, just like an infection that never gets identified and attacked with the right countermeasures.

Therefore He says, this is where we left off, Awake you who sleep. Arise from the dead and

Christ will give you light. The light is in Christ.

We are in Christ. We should be light. Don't turn your light into darkness.

Don't let darkness overcome the light. Light overcomes darkness. When it's really, really bright outside, you don't say, well, let me go get my flash dark.

It's too bright out here. I've got a flash dark in the closet. I'm going to come out here and I'm going to turn it on and it'll take some of this light away.

Ah, that's better. I don't need sunglasses. I've got my flash dark.

And it's a wide beam. It's a nine volt battery flash dark. I can really kill this light out here with my flash dark.

It doesn't work that way, does it? Darkness is the absence of something good, which is light. And we add light to a dark situation and that makes it better. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, what? Let there be light. And there was light.

Light. That's us. That's our identity.

That's our mission. That's part of being in Christ. It's valuable.

It's a privilege. Awake you who sleep. I quoted this line.

I'm really intrigued by it that Paul Simon put one of his recent songs where he says, if the answer is infinite light, talking about all the different possible religions, you know, why are you a Hindu? How can you be a Buddhist? How can you be a Hindu? How can you be a Christian? How can you be a Jew? How can you? I think that's the name of the song. How can you? And then if the answer is infinite light, all of these religions, why do we sleep in the dark? Well, I can actually and you can actually answer his question. If you're asleep in the dark, wake up.

And Christ will give you light. We are in the dark now. We end up sleeping in the dust of the earth now in a fallen and corrupt and cursed creation because when we awake and Christ gives us light, we forever appreciate the light.

We start out in the *tohu wabohu* of the formless void of our lives. God says, let there be light. And when there's light, now there is fruitfulness.

Now there is productivity. Now there is benefit. Awake and Christ will give you light.

It's such an important concept. And we have to be careful. We have to be on our guard not to sacrifice the light for darkness, not to compromise the light for darkness.

This whole section, walk in the light as He is in the light. Awake, you who sleep. Sometimes we're just unconscious.

We haven't thought it through. We haven't really considered this activity, this association, this fellowship that we are involved in. Sometimes it just kind of grows and it crept up on us unawares or it seemed harmless.

And it turned out once we began to learn what goes on in secret, wow, this isn't what I thought it was. There's a lot more to this than meets the eye. A shameful work done in secret.

If we are light and that becomes exposed, it is up to us to awake from sleep, awake and arise. Did you ever awaken and not arise? The alarm goes off, you awaken, turn off the alarm, but you do not arise. What happens if you awake and you don't arise? You're no longer awake.

Pretty soon, you wake up a second time to find that the opportunity to be on time has passed you by. When you awake, you've got to arise. Now, here's the thing.

We've seen this passage. It's clear. I don't think anybody has any question in their mind, shouldn't have any question in their mind at this point about what this passage means, right? That's awake.

You're awake to this truth. What do we have to do now? Say it out loud. If we have awakened, now what do we do? Arise.

I ought to make everybody stand up. We are awake. We know this truth.

Awake and arise. If we arise, the light that needs to shine in that situation, if we commit ourselves to living out this truth, Christ will give us the light. Should we speak or should we not speak? In what way should we disentangle ourselves from this darkness and this shameful stuff done in secret? How should I do it? If you arise, Christ will give you light.

You are now awake. You have no excuse for not understanding this passage. We've been over it several times now.

You're awake. I can sound the alarm, and I have. Paul has rung the bell here.

We're all awake. But it is up to us now to arise. And if you say, Lord, I want to arise.

I want to be sure I am walking in the light. I want to be sure that I am living as light. I want to be sure that I don't have association with unfruitful works of darkness.

Lord, I get it, and I want to do that. That's arising. And if you arise, Christ will give you light.

The specific guidance that we need in each individual situation will be given. It is a promise. Ask, and you shall receive.

Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. Arise, and Christ will give you light.

It's not hard. It's not a puzzle. It's not up on high that you have to ascend to heaven.

It's not down in the deep that you have to dig your way to the core of the earth. It is near. It is in our hearts.

It is on our lips. It will be revealed. Christ Jesus himself will give us light on how to do this.

You just have to arise. That's a decision. I don't have a choice of when the alarm goes off and wakes me up in terms of, you know, I said it.

But when it goes off, it's going to wake me up. It is what I do after I hear the alarm that makes the difference between a successful day and one that gets off to a really bad start. Arise, and Christ will give you light.

Well, we'll pause here and take our break, and we're going to pick up in verse 15 where now that we have awaked and now that we have arisen, look at the first two words in verse 15. See then. See then.

Make it happen. See then that you walk. You awake.

You arise. Make sure you walk. You can awake.

You can sit on the edge of the bed. Now stand up and put one foot in front of the other. Let's get on with it.

Let's make it happen. Let's walk in the light. That's what we'll pick up when we come back.