

Ephesians 14-10-05b

Let's resume our study now in Ephesians chapter 5, and this is such a great section of scripture, like a statesman's song, whichever one we're in, we think it's one of the greatest we've ever heard. But to me, these directly practical pieces of guidance from the Lord are so valuable. Such a wonderful thing for God to say, not only here's what you should do, but here's how to do it.

And notice that a large part, hear me now, this is important, a large part of darkness avoidance is people in darkness avoidance. I will say that again. The reason the emphasis in this section of scripture is on people, because that is the primary avenue through which we end up getting entangled in darkness.

It's people, it's associations, bad company, great band, bad moral association. Bad company corrupts, bad associations, ill-considered fellowship will corrupt us. It is corruption by contact.

This is what was illustrated in the Old Testament in the ritual defilements that are enumerated for Israel. If you touch something that is dead, you are defiled, and because you have touched it, you must go out of the camp. Your defilement means get out of association with the rest of us until you are cleansed, until you are purified, and this takes time.

You will notice that in Israel in the Old Testament, I don't have time to turn to the passages, but you know this, if someone came in contact with a corpse or bodily emission or whatever else that would defile, that would corrupt, they didn't just say, well let me just run down to the priest and have him say mumbo-jumbo hocus-pocus and I'm all good to go. No, you had to go out of the camp at least until evening, if not longer. Why? What's the principle there? That contact and defilement, you can't 1 John 1.9 that away momentarily.

It takes time to recover from defilement. The goal being, don't get defiled in the first place. Don't contact corruption in the first place.

There were running sores, there were mildew mold spots, there were things that partook of death or blood that would ritually defile an Israelite, and when that became known, whether it was vertent or inadvertent, would that be advertent? Yeah. Whether it was advertent or inadvertent, didn't matter. You had to go outside the camp.

You had to work through a ritual to be restored to fellowship and to contact with the rest of the community. You become a danger to the community because of your contact. You're not wagging around a dead squirrel and slapping people with it and causing more defilement.

You came in contact with the dead thing. Now your presence is a threat to the rest of the community. Do you see the principle? You are not your own.

You are part of a body, and what you do doesn't just affect you, it affects everyone else with

whom you are associated. There is blessing by association. I love that abbreviation in my notes all down through the years, BBA, but there is also CBA.

There is cursing by association. If you have ever taken in some of these documentaries that will go back and review the perpetration of crimes and how they were solved, there's lots of programming now. If you try to find something that at least is informative and not just bubble gum for the brain on TV, you can go and look at these forensic shows that are based on real crimes and real people.

They'll reenact and recreate the circumstances where this crime was committed and then how law enforcement went about solving it and bringing the perpetrator to justice or determining what happened. But one of the strong impressions that I come away with after seeing a variety of these over time is how many victims became victims not because they did anything wrong, but because they were associated. Here's a girl, she's living there, but she's got a brother and he's involved in the drug trade, or he's involved in some kind of crime, and because she's associated with him, she shows up and becomes what they call an innocent victim.

Children go missing and it turns out to be somebody who is illicitly associated with the adults that are in the picture. It's a bad boyfriend or it's a boyfriend of somebody else who's in the vicinity. But you watch over and over and over again, there's a strong correlation between bad associations that haven't been broken off and becoming the victim of a crime, becoming party to a bad situation.

There is cursing by association and you see it over and over and over and over again. Look at people in the Middle East and all of these Middle Eastern conflicts. You say, well here's Abu or Ahmed, all he's trying to do is run his little family store, but because of the larger conflict, his place is vandalized or blown up or he loses family members or whatever.

Well, guess what? He's living in a community that is defined by these people that are actively engaged in conflict or actively trying to perpetrate terror. He may know some of these people and he tolerates them, he stays with them, he lives in their midst and doesn't get away and now he's the quote unquote innocent victim. Associations are important and it is the primary, the primary way that darkness comes into our lives.

It's the primary way, it's associations, it is personal, it is people. This is why Paul says in verse 12 when he's talking about you were once darkness, now you are light in the Lord, walk as children of light, the fruit of the Spirit is in goodness, righteousness and truth. We talked about those things, goodness, righteousness and truth.

Goodness, righteousness and truth. By the way, let me just fix something here. In the New King James, you look at verse 9 and it's in parentheses.

I think this is a mistake personally. Wiser heads than me think they ought to be in there. But look

at the flow of this, just in English, I don't even have to go to the Greek.

You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Notice you are, for emphasis, it isn't even in the Greek. You were once darkness, but now light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light. And you see the little text note there, that number 4, for the fruit of the Spirit, and it's got a little 4 there. And you look down at your note and the Nestle-Allen United Bible Society text doesn't have Spirit there, it doesn't have pneuma, it has light, phos, light.

And I believe light is the better reading, is the correct reading. You can see how Spirit got put in there. And you can see how light got put in there.

Because people say, fruit of the Spirit, fruit of the Spirit, fruit of the Spirit. It's become such a knee-jerk. And someone may have had this as a marginal note and it got incorporated in.

But it's much easier to understand a change from light to Spirit, which is the more common phrase, fruit of the Spirit, than it is to see someone changing Spirit to light. There's no textual reason for that to happen. Light is the better.

And look at the context now and take the parentheses out. You were once darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is in all goodness, righteousness and truth.

Fruit grows in the light. And the fruit of light is not an unfruitful work of darkness. In the context we have unfruitful works of darkness, we have fruitful works of light.

And it's tragic to me that this got changed to fruit of the Spirit, because you say, oh yeah, love, joy, peace, patience. No. Fruit of the light contrasted with unfruitful work of darkness.

How do you know what's an unfruitful work of darkness? It is not good, it is not righteous, and it is not true. It's not open and above board. It's not something to be proud of.

It's not something that creates pleasantness and happiness and draws good and righteous people together. It divides. It causes dissension.

It creates awkwardness at best and spreads evil at worst. The fruit of the light, and see you don't need the parentheses now when you take spirit and correct that back to light. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light is in goodness, righteousness and truth.

All goodness, all righteousness, all truth. Finding out what is acceptable, not to me, but to the Lord. Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord, that's fruitful, that's the light.

Can I bring this before the Lord? Can I do this in the presence of the Lord? Is this an association that if I had this person to dinner and invited the Lord Jesus, like Zacchaeus, I'm coming to your house today, would the Lord Jesus be willing to sit down and have the same kind of fellowship

that I'm cultivating? Is that what He would do? Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, fruitful works of light, goodness, righteousness and truth, unfruitful works of darkness. Want to know what an unfruitful work of darkness is? Look at the fruitful works of light. If it's not that, it's an unfruitful work of darkness.

And the secret is the dark. And those things that are secret are going to be brought to light. What is whispered in the inner chamber is going to be shouted on the housetop.

Might as well live a transparent life. Isn't it great if somebody walks up behind you and you're on your computer that you don't have to hit the boss, they used to call it the boss screen. They actually, back in the days of DOS and just text screens that were amber or green, they had this thing that was, it was just a fake spreadsheet and you would load this thing up, don't ask me how I know this, but you would load this thing up as what they called a TSR, Terminate Stay Resident Program.

It would lurk in memory and it would just be watching for like a control X or something. And if you were reading email or doing some primitive thing on your computer and the boss walked up, you just hit control X and suddenly the spreadsheet pops up. It doesn't do anything, it just looks good.

And so I'm working, I'm in the middle of a spreadsheet. It was called the boss screen. And somebody would walk up behind you, hit the boss screen, it looks like you're busy.

Well, if you live a transparent life, it doesn't matter who walks up on you when, you don't have to flip the TV channel. You don't have to switch away from the screen on your computer. You're living a transparent life.

You are always in the light. There is nothing that is secret. There is nothing embarrassing.

There's nothing awkward, nothing that you have to hide. And the peace and the intrinsic happiness that comes from living a genuinely good, righteous and truthful life is well worth sacrificing the momentary guilty pleasures that come from going down some of these roads. And there are people that have got addiction level problems with what they look at on their computer, so what they look at on their television screens.

It used to be, it would be the kind of salacious material that they would read and people would get books and read these things. Shameful things in secret, you cannot, people wonder why do people have psychological problems. I'll tell you why.

You can have all kinds of tribulation in your soul. If you're living a life that has to be disguised, that has to be hidden behind a false wall, you can never have the peace of God that passes understanding. You can never be genuinely light in the Lord if there is a part of your life that you're constantly having to do the little feather boa fan dance because you are naked and ashamed behind it.

Paul says, distance yourself from that and distance yourself from the people who draw you into it. People are the avenue into darkness. People will purvey it.

People will put it on YouTube. People will put it on the internet. People will post it for you to look at.

People will send you a link on your Facebook or tweet you. Look at this. Separate yourself from the unfruitful works of darkness.

It seems like, well gosh, I just won't be hippping with it. If you walk as light in the Lord, the compensation of peace, genuine happiness, genuine productivity, the knowledge that you are fruitful in the Lord, so far transcends the cheap, never fulfilled, never genuinely happy and always lurking in the back of your mind darkness because you're a child of God and God the Holy Spirit is constantly telling us, we know better than this. We are better than this.

The Lord Jesus Christ is better than this. Why am I defiling and corrupting something that belongs to Jesus Christ? And you and I are defiling and corrupting the body of Christ when we not only do these things but even when we associate with people who do them. You touch the dead thing and come back in the camp, you're defiling the whole rest of the camp.

Remember Achan? Is there anything wrong? Is there anything intrinsically wrong with gold and silver? Is there anything intrinsically wrong with clothing? Not at all. Wonderful thing to have gold and silver. Wonderful thing to have nice clothes.

Achan, by taking possession of clothing and gold and silver in an illicit way, that which belonged to evil people that God had put under the ban and said destroy, separate from, have no contact with, partook of these, well, but they're perfectly, look at these good clothes, what a shame to burn them. What a shame to not take advantage of this perfectly good stuff. It's not perfectly good when God says it is associated with evil.

God has sent you Israelites into the land to purge it of evil, not to co-opt the evil, not to become a part of the evil. So when Achan takes that stuff and buries it in his tent and his family is aware and complicit, what happens? The entire nation is cursed and people die in the next battle because he has taken what was forbidden. He has corrupted not only himself but the rest of the community.

That's what you do. That's what I do when we do not follow the simple, clear instructions in this passage. Who's smarter, us or God? Who's got a better grip on what is genuinely fruitful and what will impart genuine glory to God and genuine happiness to us? God knows.

Unless you are hopelessly arrogant, you will admit that God knows better than we do about what is best. If we see that and we acknowledge it, this is humility. This is faith.

This is obedience. And the humble, faithful and obedient person will take these instructions and say, okay, I see that there are some things in my life that I need to evaluate and ensure that I am not having fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. I am awake now.

I want to arise. Lord, give me light. Show me how I should then live.

Do you think God would not answer that prayer? He will answer that prayer so lightning fast, so powerfully, so clearly, it will make our head spin. He is waiting for us to ask. He is awaiting for us to arise at the alarm.

So you come to verse 15, what is the result? See then that you walk circumspectly, peripateo, walk around. This is your converse. This is your path through life, the things you do.

Walk circumspectly, not as fools. You can guess what the word for fools is here. It's a word from which we get moron, not as moros, not as moroi, not as fools, but as wise.

There is a great quote. Have you heard of Charles Haddon Spurgeon? Great British preacher from 100 years and some change ago. A well-known pastor.

You can get his published sermons in volumes. He had the Spade and the Trowel that he published, which was a theological article, newsletter. Very famous guy, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, one of the great shining lights of biblical exposition of the 1800s, late 1800s.

I want to give you this quote from Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Listen carefully, "...wisdom is the right use of knowledge." To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal and are all the greater fools for it.

There is no fool so great as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom. Isn't that great? So great, I'm going to read it again.

Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal and are all the greater fools for it.

There is no fool so great as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.

God is giving us knowledge from His Word. We study it week by week, class by class. What are we doing with the knowledge? Are we knowing fools or are we using that knowledge to be wise? It's a tremendous challenge.

And this is the corner that Paul turns here in this section of his letter. See then in the light of what you have just seen about light versus darkness, about associations, about the specific analysis and evaluation that you make about those with whom you associate, see then in the light of that that you walk circumspectly. Look at where you step.

If you've got pets in your house, you know what it is to walk circumspectly. I kind of wish that there's pros and cons to having patterns and decorations in your throw rugs. There are times when I wish the rugs were solid colors so that if there's anything deposited on them, I can instantly spot it.

On the other hand, if that becomes a semi-frequent occurrence, you kind of wish there was a pattern in there so that the previous stains and things wouldn't be visible. So it cuts both ways. But I really dislike having the patterned rugs with dark and light and stuff when after having traversed one, I suddenly discover that some pet has left a deposit on it that I didn't see because it blended into the pattern.

But what I have learned is anytime, especially early in the morning or after everybody's been gone for a while and you're there and you're going to go let the dogs out, to walk circumspectly. Not as fools, but as wise. I am wise to the ways of pets trapped inside for extended lengths of time.

I'm wise to that. I have knowledge of what can happen and I implement that knowledge by walking carefully. Because it's a pain to clean my shoes or worse, my bare feet, having not walked circumspectly.

I will be defiled if I am not careful. See then, you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time. Any computer that I touch and configure the screen saver, somewhere in there, if you go to the scrolling text screen saver, the text in that screen saver will be, redeem the time.

It's always a reminder to me when I come in and I'm supposed to be working, but I've gotten to talking or thinking about other things, daydreaming away, I look back down, redeem the time. Actually, it's this way. Redeem the time.

Redeem the time. You've got to randomize it. Make it big letters.

I like to almost fill the screen when it comes across. And if my computer has been idle long enough for the screen saver to kick in, five, six minutes, what am I doing? Am I redeeming the time? Am I putting in a good day's work? Am I using the computer? If I'm sitting in front of it, seeing the screen saver, it just came on. What am I doing? What am I doing? Redeem the time.

I like that reminder. Make the best use of the time. Invest it.

Capitalize on it. Get a return from it. Let the time bear fruit.

Redeem the time. Purchase the time. Walking circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, is redeeming the time.

Notice this is not an imperative the way I like to phrase it. This is concomitant. This is coexisting

with walking circumspectly.

Walking, redeeming. They're both gerunds here. They're both I-N-G words.

They're both ongoing patterns. Walking circumspectly, redeeming the time. They go together.

If you're walking circumspectly, you're redeeming the time. If you're redeeming the time, you are walking circumspectly. This is how you redeem the time.

Do the walk. Not just talk. Not just self-deception.

Well, you know, I've got a Bible and I go to church, so I'm good to go. Walking. Carefully.

Walking not foolishly, but as wise. Taking my knowledge and using it. Redeeming the time.

Why? Because the days left to themselves are inherently evil. The time left to itself, if you don't redeem the time, it remains evil. Just like us.

If God did not redeem us through Christ, we would be corrupt, evil, and headed for death by default. We are conceived in iniquity. We're born in sin.

We by default are evil. Apart from God, without hope, without God in this world. Enemies.

Christ died for us and redeemed us. That's what we've got to do with the time that God gives us. It's in this fallen world.

It partakes of this corrupt creation and it is inherently going to be badly spent unless we redeem it. Jesus Christ redeemed us. We've got to redeem the time that Jesus Christ gives us as believers, as strangers and pilgrims on this earth.

We're in a bad place. Lots of bad people. Lots of bad stuff.

Take the time. Now, did Jesus passively become our Redeemer? Did He just kind of float along and, whoop, oh, lookie there, I'm the Savior of the world. How did that happen? It took conscious decision.

It took active expression of love to live the life and to die the death that redeemed us. It is the same if you and I are going to be Redeemers. We've got to have the same level of initiative and commitment that the Lord Jesus had to become our Redeemer.

Be a Redeemer. If you're going to be Christ-like, then be a Redeemer the way Christ was. If you're going to do what you have seen God do, then redeem the way we have seen Christ redeem.

It's active. Jesus Christ actively policed His associations, His use of time to be our Redeemer. And we should actively police our associations to ensure that we are redeeming time because the

days are evil.

Therefore, do not be unwise. Don't be a fool. Understand what the will of the Lord is.

Look up at verse 10. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is goodness, righteousness, and truth, all of it. Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord, verse 10.

Understanding what the will of the Lord is, verse 17. Find out, understand. Find out, understand.

And do not be unwise. Be drunk with wine in which is excess, dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit. Nothing wrong with wine.

In the same way, there's nothing wrong with gold and silver and clothing. It is the misuse, the misappropriation, using anything in a way that is forbidden. Food is a necessary thing, but if you eat it to excess and it becomes gluttony, that is a sin.

Many things are harmless in and of themselves. It is their misuse. And it is wrong to prohibit a thing.

Well, there's naked people on my TV. I'm throwing my TV out of the house. Drunkenness is a bad thing.

I'm throwing all the wine out of the house. Throwing all the beer out of the refrigerator. That is not the point.

Think about automobiles. Cars are a wonderful thing, but the misuse of an automobile results in destruction and death. We don't say, well, look at the statistics on wrecks and fatalities with cars.

No cars for me. It would be absurd. You can't get by in this world without a car, one or more.

But it is essential to rightly use the car. Don't misuse. Do not abuse.

Do not break the rules that attend the safe and proper use of a car. And that pertains to most things in our lives. It doesn't say have no wine anywhere in the area.

It says be not drunk, which is excessive, which is partakes of darkness. Now, I'm not saying pro or con. I think any decision people want to make with regard to light use of recreational beverages is up to you.

I think abstinence is great. I think moderation and occasionality is great. Go be warm, be fed.

Everybody makes that decision for themselves. The Bible does not prohibit anything. What the Bible does prohibit is the misuse of anything.

And you can misuse clothing. If you're a shopaholic and buy too many clothes, you're a sinner.

You are sinning and you're partaking of darkness.

If you misuse your car, you are sinning and you're partaking of darkness. Misuse, abuse of anything is a sin. It's the principle of excess.

It is the principle of covetousness. It is the principle of looking to something else for happiness or stability or fulfillment or whatever it may be. That's where the sin occurs before you ever get around to the expression.

It's the attitude that makes whatever you do at that point a sin. Walk circumspectly, not as fools. Don't be a fool.

We had an interesting discussion this weekend about people realizing the truth that God presents about life and death, heaven and hell, the future. Why would anybody in their right mind not choose to be a believer and a productive and mature one? Why would you not? What sense would it make? Aren't unbelievers, at least hypothetically, could you make the case that anybody that doesn't believe in Jesus Christ just isn't possessed of all the facts? Who in their right mind would choose whatever your version of hell is instead of eternal life with God if they really understood what was at stake? Is there not some sense in which they're blind? And the answer is no, because you can choose to be a fool. It's a part of free will.

Part of free will is there is a way that seems right to me, and the fact that you tell me the ends are ever the ways of death, I just reject that. I just don't let that into my reality, because I'm a fool and I choose to be a fool. I don't have to be a fool.

I choose to be. And God gives us the freedom to be a fool. So this comes down to choice.

Don't be a fool. God doesn't give us a command if we don't have the ability to fulfill it. If you were a clinical fool, if you were a born fool, if you were a genetically determined fool, why would God then give you a command, don't be a fool? If you can't help it, God's not going to give you a command.

The reverse of that is, if God gives you a command, then you can help it. And if you have a command, don't be a fool, that means you are capable of being wise, and we are all capable of being wise. Do not be a fool.

Be wise. Do not be unwise, he says again in verse 17, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Verse 10, find out what is acceptable to the Lord.

You love somebody, you figure out what they like. If they don't like meatloaf with green peppers in it, you don't make it. In my entire married life, Patty has never once made meatloaf with green peppers still in it.

She tried once putting them in and taking them out. And after I expressed dislike for that, it never

happened again. She loves me.

She finds out what I like. And almost to a fault, she makes what I like, even when I probably ought to be eating things that are good for me, that are not horribly repulsive to my taste. But she loves me.

She finds out what is acceptable and what I like, and that's what she does, and that's what she makes. If you love someone, that's what you do. Do you love the Lord or not? Don't be a fool, and don't fool yourself.

If you love the Lord, you'll find out what's acceptable to Him. You'll find out what is pleasing to Him, and you will do that. You'll redeem the time.

You'll be fruitful. You'll walk in the light. And you will not, in the interest of self-gratification, corrupt the body of Christ by maintaining associations that ought to be cut off, that ought to be placed at a distance.

If you love the Lord and you love the people of God, you will not bring that darkness into the camp and spread cursing by association. You and I have a responsibility to analyze ourselves and make sure not only for our sakes, but for the sake of believers, and most of all for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father, that we are not dragging corruption and defilement into the body of Christ. All of those in hymns go out the window if you corrupt and defile it.

And we will find ourselves outside the camp. We will find ourselves cut off. We will find ourselves in the eternal future in the darkness which is outside.

You choose darkness in this life, you will be in darkness in the next. The darkness which is outside, your inheritance is on the line. Verse 5, no fornicator, unclean person, unclean person.

How do you get unclean? Maintaining associations that defile. No unclean person nor covetous man who is not idolatrous has any inheritance. You're going to be out there on the shores of the lake of fire, experiencing the loss that's represented by the second death.

It's an awful thing and it's so unnecessary. Don't be a fool, be wise. Well we'll pick up next time in verse 19, speaking to one another musically, beautifully, in an enhanced way.

The thing about music is it's got lyrics that have content, but it's enhanced. It's polyvalent. It's multi-band, multiple form of communication.

The truth that we speak musically is truth at multiple levels, ministering in multiple ways, ministers to the mind and to the emotions. It's the way God communicates to us in His Word and that's what we have coming up here in verse 19. It is the multiply satisfactory, multiply beneficial, multi-level exponential blessing.

The metaphor here is music, but it's a metaphor. What it means is there is a depth and there is a substance and there is an ineffable and transcendent quality to the truth that we speak to one another, because it speaks at multiple levels. It's like body language, beyond what you say, beyond what you can text on your phone with little misspelled words.

If you're in someone's presence and you see their face and you see their body language, it is so much more expressive. Do you want to text XOXO to somebody? You love, or do you want to hug them and embrace them? If it's your significant other, do you want to have an intimate embrace? Do you want to kiss them? You can only do that in a presence. It's a multiply leveled form of expression.

That's what's coming up in verse 19. It's powerful, powerful stuff. That's what we'll see next time.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the presence of Your Spirit. Thank You most of all for the Lord Jesus, who has made it possible for us to enter into life and fruitfulness and fellowship and relationship with You.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make these things live and breathe fire in our souls to motivate and compel us and illuminate our paths so that we can live the life to which we've been called, the life for which You have equipped us, the life that makes it possible to enter into even greater life in the ages to come. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.