

## Ephesians 5B

- We're returning to Paul's fifth chapter of Ephesians, where we pick up again in Paul's list of personal vices that stand in the way of our mission as Christians
  - Last we studied, Paul was calling upon the church in Ephesus to walk in love as Christ did
    - Which we understood means to live self-sacrificially, loving others more than ourselves
    - Putting the needs of others over our needs
    - We do all this to show Christ to the world, as ambassadors drawing men and women to Christ
    - We're talking about having a missional mindset, which is a mark of spiritual maturity
  - But when our old nature drives our thinking and our behavior, we cease walking in love, choosing instead to love ourselves
    - In those moments – or seasons – of our life, we're setting aside our mission
    - We're taking a vacation from our service to Christ and from our witness to the world
    - Paul says we ought not do that
  - Then Paul embarked on a laundry list of personal vices that interfere with walking in love
    - Paul began with immorality and impurity
    - Then he moved to vulgarity and unhelpful speech
    - Those two categories alone were enough to convict all of us, I'm sure
  - But knowing what we should do is one thing, yet finding reason to actually do it is another
    - And Paul understood the challenge he was placing before the church

- So he interrupts his list of vices for an exhortation to give cause for us to obey these commands
  - His exhortation begins in v.5 and runs until v.17

**Eph. 5:5** For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

**Eph. 5:6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

**Eph. 5:7** Therefore do not be partakers with them;

**Eph. 5:8** for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

**Eph. 5:9** (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

**Eph. 5:10** trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

- In v.5 Paul says that people who do the very things he just counseled against will not see an inheritance in the kingdom
  - In Greek, there is no article before the word inheritance
    - So the better translation would be that none of these people “has inheritance” in the kingdom
    - The lack of an article before the word inheritance suggests this is a reference to unbelievers
    - That is, those who have no part of the kingdom whatsoever
  - From there Paul goes on to contrast believers with unbelievers throughout the rest of this passage
    - His point is we can’t let the world’s behaviors become our testimony since we have a mission to stand apart from the world
    - That is to say, if we adopt the same behaviors as an unbeliever...
    - Paul says “if we become partakers with them”
    - Then we have no hope to influence the world for Christ
  - Then notice how Paul develops his argument

- First, he tells the church don't be deceived by empty words
- False teachers were apparently teaching that a Christian's behaviors were not important to God
- Once we come to faith, we're saved regardless of how we behave
- Therefore, we shouldn't concern ourselves with being holy or pursuing sanctification, etc.
- Paul disputes this false teaching with three arguments
  - First, Paul says these behaviors bring about God's wrath
    - For believers, God poured His wrath out on Christ
    - While unbelievers receive God's wrath themselves
  - Either way, Paul's point is God detests these behaviors
    - Knowing these things lead God to pour His wrath out on the world, how can we think God approves of us following in their footsteps?
    - Do we suppose God doesn't mind? Do we expect Him to turn a blind eye?
  - We may not receive His wrath, since He already poured that wrath out on His Son for our sake
    - Nevertheless, we would be foolish to think we can sin with impunity in the meantime
    - The Lord will not be mocked, not even by His children
    - So Paul's first point is that we know these things are not acceptable to God, because He says they are deserving of His wrath
- Secondly, Paul says we are not called to be partakers with the world
  - The Greek word for partaker can be translated partner or one who shares something with another
    - We aren't supposed to share the same testimony or lifestyle as that of unbelievers
    - We are to live missionally, which requires we walk a different path

- It's as if believers and unbelievers are both salespeople, each pitching a different product
- Unbelievers are declaring that what they offer "Tastes Great"
- And the Church is declaring that what we offer is "Less Filling"
- But what if we adopted their slogan?
  - They said "tastes great" and our response was "tastes great"
  - That's what happens when we act like them and look like them
  - Their slogan becomes our slogan, because their product becomes our product
  - Missional thinking understands that we can't look like the world or else we have nothing to offer them
- In v.8 Paul says, remember you were taken out of their world and brought into a new life by His grace
  - You were once a salesman for the product of darkness
  - Now you are selling the product of Light
  - So walk as children of the Light
  - Which means displaying goodness and representing truth
  - So Paul's second argument is, we must look different than the world if we are to influence the world
- Which leads us to Paul's third argument in v.10
  - We are to live for the goal of pleasing the Lord, not ourselves
    - The Christian who thinks he or she can do whatever they want because we've already been forgiven by the blood of Christ is seeking only to please him or herself
    - That's not the goal of a Christian life
  - Notice Paul says in v.10 that we are trying to learn what pleases Christ
    - The phrase "trying to learn" is a single Greek word that means to prove something
    - It's the same Greek word used in Romans 12:2 when Paul says

[Rom. 12:2](#) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- So Paul isn't suggesting that we are all searching to know what Christ wants as if it's a big mystery
  - We already know what pleases Christ, because it's in His word
  - Paul means we "prove" to the world what pleases God
  - We are walking billboards displaying godliness and holiness
- When people witness us living differently, they get proof of what pleases Christ
  - They learn that God is pleased when we keep His commands
  - That He is pleased when we walk in love
  - And He is pleased when we serve Him in our mission
  - We prove these truths by our lifestyle
- But take a second look at how Paul began this passage
  - Paul opened in v.5 saying you know with certainty...
    - Paul strings together two different Greek words for "to know"
    - In effect, Paul says "you know that you know"
    - He's emphasizing this truth is something believers can't deny
    - We can't pretend we haven't heard it or we hope it isn't true
  - We know that unbelievers have no inheritance in the kingdom
    - This is an odd way for Paul to describe unbelievers, that is as those without inheritance in the kingdom
    - It's oddly specific, because of course unbelievers have no inheritance in the kingdom
    - They won't even *be* in the kingdom
    - So why make a reference to an unbelievers' lack of inheritance?

- I think Paul chose that odd reference to remind believers that we need to think about how our behavior impacts our inheritance
  - Living like the world means potentially sacrificing something in the kingdom
  - In effect, this becomes Paul's fourth argument against sharing in the world's behaviors
  - Not only are we testing God, not only are we failing to stand apart from the world, and not only are we not pleasing Christ...
  - But we are also taking risks with our reward
- So rather than joining in the world's behaviors, Paul says we must go in an opposite direction

**Eph. 5:11** Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;

**Eph. 5:12** for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.

**Eph. 5:13** But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.

**Eph. 5:14** For this reason it says,

"Awake, sleeper,  
And arise from the dead,  
And Christ will shine on you."

- Don't participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, Paul says
  - Here again, his mention of bearing fruit (or lack thereof) alludes to our inheritance
  - We'll gain nothing by following after the world's example
  - On the other hand, we bear fruit for God when we obey Him
- When we live a called-out life, Paul says we expose the deeds of darkness
  - This is an important principle of Christian witnessing
  - But it can be misunderstood in practice

- The principle is this: when we live a life following Christ, we expose the sin of the world, which is the purpose of the Church on earth
  - It's the Principle of Contrast
  - Differences in form suggest differences in meaning
  - When two things differ in appearance, they represent differences in meaning or message
- For example, the color red in a traffic light contrasts starkly with the color green
  - The contrast between the colors indicates to us a difference in meaning (i.e., stop vs. go)
  - And even if you're color blind, you can still perceive a contrast
  - Because the location of each colored light is contrasted (i.e., red on top vs. green on bottom) to reinforce there is a difference in meaning
- And so it must be for the Church if we're going to fulfill our mission
  - Our choices are supposed to contrast with the world's choices so we may convey a different meaning, a different message
    - That's what Paul means when he says we expose the deeds of darkness
    - Our life of godliness sheds light on the world's evil
    - But it goes beyond merely exposing evil
    - In fact, the Greek word translated expose actually means to refute
  - So by our life we are refuting the world's perspective
    - For example, they say humans evolved from animals
      - By how we live, we testify we were created in God's image
    - The world says fleshly desires are natural and cannot be judged no matter how depraved and selfish
      - We testify that we are desperately wicked by nature and deserving of judgment, yet by grace we may be rescued

- The world holds we are living meaningless and temporary lives of quiet desperation, therefore get all you can while you can
  - We testify that everyone has an eternal future, therefore consider carefully what comes after death
- As obvious as the Principle of Contrast may be, some Christians misunderstand how the Bible expects us to put this principle into practice
  - Some Christians think it's about what we say rather than what we do
  - So they choose to expose the world's sin using only their mouths, rather than through living a holy lifestyle
  - They call out others' sin while failing to deal with it in their own lives
- We've all seen examples of such misdirected witnessing for Christ
  - Like Christians who post condemning messages online against homosexuality, yet at the same time they praise movies depicting sex and violence or music laced with obscenities
  - They protest legalized abortion but they turn a blind eye to unmarried Christian couples living together
  - They complain about the ungodliness inside public schools while raising kids that use profanity and pornography
- So when Paul says we are to "expose" the deeds of darkness, we need to understand he's talking about our behavior, not our words
  - We are to preach the Gospel everyday and everywhere, but only use words when necessary
  - Our mission is to live a called-out life before our neighbors, not call out our neighbors for their sinful lives
  - To do otherwise is to risk becoming known for what we're against rather than to be known for Who we serve
- That's why Paul remarks in v.12 that it's disgraceful to even speak of the things the world does in secret
  - He means when it comes to dealing with the gross immoralities that characterize the world, believers need less talk and more walk

- It's unwholesome to even discuss the evil that runs rampant around us, because the Bible tells us to separate ourselves from the things of the world
- That means moving so far away from it that we're not even drawn into conversations about such things
- So when your colleagues at the water cooler or your friends between classes are entertaining discussion of evil things, step away
- Because in the end, apologetics isn't about bringing powerful arguments in to those moments
  - It's about having a convicting testimony
  - So that through living a called-out life, you expose the evil of the world
  - That exposure may then lead to an opportunity for you to give your testimony
  - Some may be convicted by your lifestyle, and so they will ask you to give a defense for the hope in you
  - At that point, you will have skipped past the need to discuss disgraceful things
  - You'll be speaking about the Lord and His love and grace
- That's what Paul means when he says the evil things of the world become visible when they are exposed by light, because light exposes everything
  - Living a life that puts away sin and obeys the Lord is light in an evil world
  - As Jesus taught us

**[Matt. 5:14](#)** "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

**[Matt. 5:15](#)** nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

**[Matt. 5:16](#)** "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

- Collectively, the Church is to be a light in the world

- The Lord placed us in the world to make the truth visible
- When we live differently than the world, we shine a light that exposes their darkness
- Notice in v.16 Jesus says our light is our good works, not our good words
- Isn't interesting how often as we plan ways to reach the world for Christ, our thoughts run first to better ways we can communicate better about Christ
  - We make flyers, billboards, websites, programs, videos, etc.
    - We begin to think that our mission is to talk about Christ
    - But the Bible says that's putting the cart before the horse
  - Our mission begins with how we live, so that through good deeds, we bring light to darkness and then we follow that with our words
    - Ironically, if we were to talk to the world about Christ and about our church...
    - Yet at the same time we mimic the world's behaviors and habits and speech and values...
    - Then we would shed no spiritual light despite our words, because we blend into the world and share in their darkness
  - But turn that around...when we live a called-out life before the world...
    - Showing kindness and charity to everyone, while restraining our speech
    - In purity and self-restraint, steering clear of the bad behavior of the world
    - And even going so far as to excuse ourselves when conversations turn to sordid or vulgar topics
    - Then Paul says we will be serving the mission of bringing light into darkness *even if we should say nothing about Christ*
  - And in the end, your lifestyle will lead to opportunity to testify, because sooner or later someone is going to ask you important questions
    - Someone in a crisis will come to you for spiritual support because they remember you lived in a peace others lacked

- Or someone convicted in their sin by your called-out life will ask how they can rise above their sin too
- In those moments, you'll share your testimony, and it will have power to work far beyond your expectations
- Because your life testimony preceded your testimony of words, and in that way you brought light into that person's dark world
- Paul sums up his arguments in v.14 by quoting what might have been an early Christian hymn or poem
  - He says to the believer "awake and rise from the dead, so Christ may shine on you"
    - This is probably a hymn paraphrasing of Isaiah 60:1
    - It's an elegant, concise summary of all that Paul has been teaching
  - Having been saved and made alive in Christ spiritually, now we must awaken from the dead life we lived before faith
    - This is another way of saying we must take off that old nature and put on the new self, in behavioral terms
    - Our spiritual nature has already changed – that is, we're awake – but now the time has come to rise up out of bed and get to work
  - But many Christians are still lying in bed, so to speak
    - Like a person who has been awoken by their alarm clock
    - They reached over to silence the alarm, but they think to themselves, "Boy this bed sure feels comfortable."
    - It would be so easy to just stay in that bed, to fall back to sleep
    - But they know they must arise, because they have to get to work or school on time
  - Getting out of bed requires a degree of effort and commitment and sacrifice
    - It doesn't feel good
    - Nevertheless, we will ourselves to do what's right even though it runs against the desires of our flesh

- We do so because we want the blessings that come from our paycheck or from the degree we're pursuing
- We know if we stay in bed, the good feeling passes quickly
- And before long, we'll regret putting something far greater at risk
- That's what the hymn means when it says "Christ will shine on you"
  - It's a reference to the blessing that Christ will bring to those who make the effort to leave their dead life behind
  - If we rise to follow Christ we will know His pleasure which is reflected in our reward
  - That's our motivation to turn off the snooze and crawl out of that comfortable bed
  - It's a decision to forgo temporary pleasure to gain eternal blessings
- As Paul concludes

[Eph. 5:15](#) Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,

[Eph. 5:16](#) making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

[Eph. 5:17](#) So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

- Therefore, let's be careful how we live our Christian life, our walk with Christ
  - Don't be unwise, which is to say don't make foolish tradeoffs
    - Electing to stay in bed an extra hour or two at the risk of being fired or failing a class is an obviously unwise choice
    - Similarly, electing to live in immorality, impurity, greed, vulgarity or in any way that pleases the flesh and displeases the Lord is also unwise
    - It's trading something eternal and weighty for something temporary and meaningless
  - Instead, Paul tells us to make the most of your time
    - Your time refers to the number of days each of us have been appointed to live on earth

- People don't usually like to talk much about mortality
- But everyone knows it...no one lives forever
- We have a limited time to serve Christ, to prove ourselves faithful servants
  - As I reflect on my own situation, I can sense the time slipping away
  - My walk began when I came to Christ in my late twenties...so let's round up to age 30
  - Let's also assume I'll be blessed to live until age 80
- That's gives me 50 years of opportunity
  - If that sounds like a lot of time, then you must be under the age of 25, because to anyone past middle age, it doesn't sound like much
  - And it isn't...that's only 18,250 days
  - Then consider I've already reached the age of 51, so that means I only have a little over 10,000 days left give or take
  - That's assuming I live to 80...it might be far less
  - And no matter what age we are now, who's to say how many years we have remaining?
- So Paul says count each day and maximize its potential
  - Don't worry about the days already past, since what can we do about those anyway?
    - Let's think only about what's left and ask yourself how are you going to use each of those days to bring light to the world?
    - What behaviors still stand in the way?
    - Paul asks us to make the most of those days...why let even one be wasted?
  - Paul says we should do this because the days are evil
    - He means if we don't make a plan and commitment to use the days well, the evil of the world around us and of our flesh will probably get the better of us

- We may go to bed with the best of intentions to get up early and make it to work on time
- But if all we have is good intentions, then “hope” is not a plan
- So when the moment of decision comes, the evil in our flesh will likely pull us off our goal
- One my brothers was notorious for sleeping soundly
  - His alarm clock would sound but he would silence it without even waking up
    - He was constantly late for school or work
    - He was sleeping at my house the night my wife went into labor with our first child
    - Despite the commotion, he never woke up
    - We even tried to wake him as we were leaving the house for the hospital, but no matter how hard I shook him, he wouldn't wake up
  - So eventually he had to make a plan to be sure he woke up in the morning
    - He bought the loudest alarm he could find and placed it on the other side of his bedroom
    - So when the alarm sounded, he was forced to arise and get out of bed to silence it
  - That's Paul's charge to us today
    - We must make plans in our life that will guard us from ourselves and lead us to make the most of each day that remains
    - And then we can live out the testimony we've been given
    - For the purpose of glorifying our Father in Heaven
    - Leading to the potential for greater blessing in the Kingdom to come