

# The Pearl of the Epistles – Ephesians

## God's Light

### Ephesians 5:8-14

***Ephesians 5:8-14** For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: **9** (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) **10** Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. **11** And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. **12** For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. **13** But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. **14** Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

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#### Introduction

It has been some time since we have been in Ephesians so I want to review the previous passage, Ephesians 5:1-7. The Apostle Paul exhorts the believers in Ephesus to be followers of God and to walk in love, as Christ showed His love. The reason is that Christ gave Himself freely as an offering that God would accept. But he warned them of six common sins affecting the church at Ephesus. Paul declares that these sins should not be “named among you” as they were believers.

Fornication / Sexual immorality – sexual intercourse outside of marriage; the Greek word is *porneia*, which is sometimes translated as “fornication.” (Ephesians 5:3)

Uncleanness / Impurity – while this word includes immorality, it also defines such practices of prostitution and homosexuality. (Ephesians 5:3)

Covetousness / Greed is the desire to have more. (Ephesians 5:3) D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones reviews “covetousness or greed” this way:

*“This means, of course, avarice, love of money, love of money as money; love of money partly for itself and partly because of what it can do for us, the things we can buy with money, the things we procure with money, the things we can do if we have money—in fact, the love of all that money can do and achieve—that is what Paul is condemning under the word covetousness.”*

Jesus talked about covetousness or greed in this way:

**Matthew 6:24** *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

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*John D. Rockefeller, one of the richest men of his time, was asked; "How much money is enough money?" He replied, "Just a little bit more."  
This is the love of money.*

Filthiness / Obscenity – is the Greek word *aischros* meaning shameful, base. (Ephesians 5:4) Filthiness ties together the previous acts of “fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness” with a person’s speech toward these same acts. He compares the act with the language associated.

When Jesus was teaching on the Sermon on the Mount, He reminded His hearers that while the Law forbade certain acts (to kill, to commit adultery, etc.), Jesus taught that if you are angry with your brother, or lust after the opposite sex, you have broken those laws. This is the meaning of the Apostle Paul: obscenity is the same as performing the act.

Foolish talking – is the Greek word *morologia* meaning silly talk, buffoonery. (Ephesians 5:4) This is the language of tearing down the morals or high standards of behavior of others.

Jesting – is related to filthiness and foolish talking with the emphasis on vulgar humor.

John R. W. Stott writes in his book, “God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians,” “All three refer to a dirty mind expressing itself in dirty conversation.”

Paul charges them to not be “partakers” with those that do these sins (Ephesians 5:7).

In this passage, Paul explains why believers are not to be like the world.

### Live as Radiating Light

**Ephesians 5:8** For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

Here, as in other places in scripture, darkness symbolizes lack of understanding and death (Psalms 88:12; 82:5; Ephesians 2:1; 4:17). Paul reminds them that their previous condition was outside of Christ, in darkness, (2:2, 11; 4:22), but now they are the light in the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Notice with me that it doesn't say "light of the Lord", but instead says "light in the Lord." It is the Lord that powers the light within us. Without the Lord's influence upon the Christian, they would be partakers of darkness as they would not have the power of the Lord.

Charles Stanley comments on this verse:

*God intends that His children act as beacons of light in a dark world, as lighthouses showing the way to spiritual safety for those about to sink into the abyss.*<sup>2</sup>

### Light Produces Fruit

9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) - Paul is emphasizing "light" in this passage (5 times in 5:8-14). He is not the only Biblical author with this point of view.

The Apostle Matthew wrote:

**Matthew 4:16** *The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.*

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The Apostle John wrote:

**John 1:4** *In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

**1 John 1:5** *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

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Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount:

**Matthew 5:14** *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

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<sup>1</sup> Barry, J. D., Grigoni, M. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Mangum, D., & Whitehead, M. M. (2012). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Eph 5:8). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley, C. F. (2005). *The Charles F. Stanley life principles Bible: New King James Version* (Eph 5:8). Nashville, TN: Nelson Bibles.

Luke the author of the Gospel by the same name spoke of the job that John the Baptist was to fulfill:

***Luke 1:79** To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

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The Apostle John received the same message as Paul:

***John 3:19** And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

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I have many Bible translations in my library. I always prepare my studies and sermons beginning with the King James Version, as that is the version that I cut my teeth on and is my preferred translation. But I often look at other translations as a type of commentary. I found it quite interesting that several versions translated the phrase “fruit of the Spirit” as “fruit of light.” (English Standard Version, Holman Christian Standard Bible, American Standard Bible, New Living Translation, New International Version to name a few). I found this translation to be very enlightening. The Apostle is discussing the old life as darkness and the new life as light. We know that the Spirit of God indwells the believer at the time of conversion so it is a given that the “fruit of the Spirit” is good and righteous and truth. These translations, using the metaphor of Spirit of Light, are in line with the textual argument. The believer is in the light of the Lord, and they are also in the Light.

The life we live, expressed in our conduct as Christians, is to reflect the “fruit of the light” - goodness, righteousness and truth. Fruit is to grow and mature. The Christian should exhibit mature fruit which is the opposite of bad, wicked, or lies. The Christian’s character and conduct is the only evidence of the new birth. Recently I posted a quote of D. L. Moody on my Facebook page. He said “Out of 100 men, one will read the Bible, the other 99 will read the Christian.” The testimony of the believer in the world is the responsibility that each Christian carries. For example:

*English evangelist Tom Rees told a story of a man who was saved in one of his meetings. He was a terrible drunk and beat his family. His alcoholism led to the poverty of his wife and children. When he met Christ, he immediately gave up alcohol. He became a loving husband, good provider, and tender father. His drinking buddies did not like the change. They were confronted by a stranger. They began to persecute him, attacking the Bible and ridiculing him for being foolish enough to believe it. One of them tackled him with a Scripture passage. “Hey Bob,*

*how about that place in the Bible where Jesus was in somebody's house and turned water into wine? That's pretty far-fetched! You don't believe that, do you? The converted drunk had not been saved very long, but his answer was classic. He said, "I don't know anything about that. I can't say if Christ turned water into wine in that house, but I know that He changed beer into furniture in my house."*

This man's fruit was easily seen and identified.

### Light Tests Acceptability

*10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*

As Christians, we are to live our lives in an acceptable manner to the Lord. When I joined the U.S. Coast Guard, I raised my hand and swore an oath upon my enlistment.

*"I, Robert C. Crowder, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God."*

As long as I was a member of the U. S. Coast Guard, I was bound by my oath.

The writer of Romans declares:

**Romans 12:1-2** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

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John Phillips writes:<sup>3</sup>

*"The believer becomes a member of this mystical, supernatural body of Christ by yet another supernatural work of the Holy Spirit known as the baptism of the Spirit. There is nothing natural about being a Christian! His new life in Christ is supernatural from start to finish. It's just as*

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<sup>3</sup> John Phillips, Exploring Ephesians & Philippians, Kregel, 147

*supernatural as the birth, life, miracles, teaching, character, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, enthronement, and second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*The criterion for judging what is to be permitted in our lives is whether or not the conduct is acceptable to the Lord. That Standard settles all the issues. It sweeps away all the befuddling, pettifogging compromises and excuses. When Christ is brought into the picture, the choices are clear.”*

My observations in different ministries over the past thirty years have identified that many Christians do not live their lives “acceptable unto the Lord.” Instead they continue to live their lives acceptable unto themselves. When the subject of being a “fruit inspector” is raised, people often say that we are to “love” one another and not judge, like that is the only rule of a believer. I am often confronted with people quoting the Bible where it says, “Judge not that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1; Luke 6:37) This is the totality of their argument, saying that Christian is not to judge others. And yet the very act of Christianity is that there should be a different person than before they gave their hearts to Jesus. Perhaps that is what happens; they simply give their hearts but not their lives. They make a decision that they agree with the teachings of the Bible and that Jesus is who the Bible says He is. They accept that Jesus was the sacrifice for their sin, but their life never changes. They do not exhibit fruit of the Lord.

The story is told of a man returning from his travels bought his wife a matchbox that would glow in the dark. His wife hurriedly turned off the light, but the matchbox did not glow. The husband thought he had been cheated and the wife was disappointed. Upon closer investigation, there was some writing in French. The next day she took the matchbox to a friend that could translate the words. The woman translated the sentence for the wife: “If you want me to shine in the night, keep me in the light.” That is good advice to Christians today as well as in the time of the Apostle Paul. If we are to “glow” to the world, then we must “spend time in the light” through prayer, confessing the darkness within our souls and studying the scriptures.”

### Light Reproves

**11** *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*

There is a vast difference between darkness and light. Obviously if we only considered light, then we could easily understand this passage. But there are other differences as well. Diseases flourish in the dark. Plant life will die for lack of the light.

My wife Linda and I have moved many times in our lives. In the US Coast Guard we were transferred to Galveston, Texas; Mobile, Alabama; Wichita Falls, Texas; Chicago, Illinois; Denver, Colorado; Miami, Florida; Elizabeth City, North Carolina, and Grand Prairie, Texas. We have been transferred in business to Denver, Colorado; Madison, Wisconsin; Augusta, Georgia, and Longview, Texas. My wife has always had a green thumb so we were always moving plants. On one occasion we rented a 10' trailer to move her plants from Texas to Colorado. Another time we were moving and instead of renting a trailer, Linda simply overwatered her plants and stuck them into boxes knowing they would not see the light of day for weeks. When we finally took delivery of our household goods, the first boxes Linda opened were her plants. Without sunlight, some of the weakest plants died as they were in the darkness for so long. Other plants were very sickly and only the strongest and mature plants were going to pull through the ordeal without much damage.

Spiritual darkness will have the same effect on the Christian. Staying too long in the darkness will make you very sickly spiritually, even to the point that your testimony to the world dies off. Only the strongest and mature will come through fairly unscathed by being in prolonged darkness. That is not what God wants for you and the Apostle Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers with *“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”* May I say that that is very good advice for us today? We should leave the darkness behind and reflect the light of life to a dying world. We should reprove the works of darkness, meaning “admonish:-convict, convince, tell a fault, rebuke.” Does that sound like we should not judge the works of darkness to you?

I do want to put in a word of caution here. While we are to look for fruit and we are to reprove the works of darkness, let us never forget that God sent Jesus to die for those practicing darkness. It is God's wish that all be saved.

***John 3:17*** For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

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It is OK to hate the sin, but never the sinner.

***12*** For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

Paul admonishes them that they are not to participate in the practices of evil, they are to reprove those that fellowship in the unfruitful works of darkness, but he says, *“it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”*

***13*** But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

Have you ever turned over a log or a rock and jump back because of the ugly creatures that make darkness their home? Do you remember dropping that rock so you don't let any of the beetles, grubs, ants, centipedes, chameleons, and snakes get on you? I certainly have. There is a parallel in the uncovering of those ugly creatures and the action of the Holy Spirit in exposing the works of darkness in our lives by bringing them into the light of God.

### Wake Up

*14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

This is not a quote from an Old Testament passage, although there are some allusions to Isaiah 26:19; or Isaiah 60:1-3, but those texts do not follow the sense of those passages. Some have said that this may have been a hymn that the church sung. We are not to know. But the message is very clear...Church awake from out of the darkness. Rise from the actions of the dead! Christ will give thee light!

### Conclusion

Considering that Jesus Christ is “the light of the world,” and that we are “light in the Lord” by virtue of our incorporation in him, and, further, that we have a positive charge to “Live as children of light,” as well as a negative responsibility to “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather to expose them” – the Church needs to wake up! So Paul concludes this section with verse 14: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”<sup>4</sup>

Why did Jesus come into the world?

*Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

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We are a holy people (1 Peter 2:9)– we are set aside to do the work of the Father and are partakers of the “spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

We are joint heirs (Romans 8:17) – we have been delivered from the power of darkness and made joint heirs with Jesus Christ. He has transformed from unfruitful works of darkness into the kingdom of God.

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<sup>4</sup> R. Kent Hughes, Ephesians, The Mystery of the Body of Christ, Crossway, 167



We are light in the Lord (Matthew 5:14) – we have been changed from the unrighteousness of our past lives and brought into the light of God. We are to bring that light into the world of darkness of which we were once partakers.

We are to spread the light of the Father in every recess of the world. We are to emulate the Father.

*Robert C. Crowder*