

EPHESIANS – LIVING IN GOD’S LIGHT

Ephesians 5:6-21

August 7, 2022

We are now on this last section of Paul’s instructions for how Christians are to live out their faith as imitators of God, our heavenly Father to the unbelieving world around us. Paul reminds us of this in **Ephesians 5:1-2**, *“Be imitators of God in everything you do, for then you will represent your Father as his beloved sons and daughters. And continue to walk surrendered to the extravagant love of Christ, for he surrendered his life as a sacrifice for us. His great love for us was pleasing to God, like an aroma of adoration – a sweet healing fragrance.”* So how do we imitate God? Paul gives us the answer in **verse 3**, *“And have nothing to do with sexual immorality, lust, or greed – for you are his holy ones and let no one be able to accuse you of them in any form.”* These kinds of behaviours will damage our Christian witness and make us ineffective in reaching others for Christ, plus they will make us unfit to receive an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ that He is preparing for His return. Paul’s stern warning here is that sinful habits and sinful behaviour have no place in a believer’s life, and Paul goes even further in his warning by telling us neither should we associate with those who claim to be believers, but continue to live immoral, impure, and greedy lives. Paul is encouraging us here that that was your past, now you are a new creation so *“live as children of light”* (Ephesians 5:8), which takes us to Paul’s next teaching which starts in Ephesians 5:6!

So, how do we counteract all that negativity, naysaying, and darkness we often experience around us and all the accusations and lies that Satan continually whispers in our ears – by living in God’s light, which means remaining positive and grounded in God’s love as we remember where we came from – *“Once your life was full of sin’s darkness, but now you have the very light of our Lord shining through you because of your union with him (Christ). Your mission is to live as children flooded with his revelation-light! And the supernatural fruits of his light will be seen in you – goodness, righteousness, and truth. Then you will learn to choose what is beautiful to the Lord.”* (Ephesians 5:8-10 the Passion Translation). Real, mature born-again Christians have no reason to ever be discouraged, because as God has been with us in the past to bring us to where we are today, He will continue to reveal His truth to us, taking us even further and deeper into His presence. So, we need to always stay positive and encouraged as we pray for breakthrough-after-breakthrough in the kingdom of darkness around

us. The secret is to trust in the Lord, and never lose hope for a moment! And we can only do that when we stay in His light, flooded and totally enveloped by His revelation light so that we would always choose what is beautiful to the Lord, never allowing a negative thought, word, or action into our midst to take a foothold and discourage us!

However, darkness does come along at times for everyone one of us – and we have to deal with it. Paul tells us in **verses 11-13** that there is something positive we can do about the darkness we find ourselves in at times, which is to expose it by shining God's light on it – ***“Have nothing to do with fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them...everything exposed by the light becomes visible – and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.”*** God's light is full of goodness and reveals the truth and when His light floods a dark place or dark situation, things once hidden are exposed, and Satan's evil schemes are revealed. The most powerful source of light that is available to us is the Word of God, and when we shine that light into the darkness, the darkness has no other choice but to flee. For, it's impossible for the forces of darkness to continue to exist in the light of God's holy presence. The works of the devil can't stand against God's light!

Unfortunately, the problem is that most Christians are ill-equipped to fight the battles around them – because they don't know how to use God's Word effectively. God's word is filled with His promises that we can wield like a double-edged sword against Satan and the powers of darkness that come wave-after-wave to overpower us. So, we need to be in God's Word daily, and put on the armour of God daily for protection so that we can be well equipped to fight and always be victorious. In the past, Christians have allowed our enemy Satan to take too much territory, bringing darkness where there should be light, as a result, Christian families and marriages are in decline, churches are struggling and in decline, our youth have drifted away from the faith, people outside of our doors don't seem to be interested in our gatherings, and disease and death is taking far too many casualties among us. So, it looks to the world, as if Satan is winning the war and the church is powerless to stop him. The church has allowed this to happen – because we have been fearful and reluctant to shine our light into the darkness and follow the command we find here to ***“expose the darkness!”***

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah cried out to God's chosen people, Israel, calling them to wake up to how they are being influenced by the ungodly culture around them and falling into idolatry. Calling them to wake up before they fall under God's wrath; however, Israel failed to heed the warning and fell under God's judgment, as a result they were invaded and conquered by Babylon, and carried off into slavery for 70 years. In **verse 14** Paul gives the church the same warning – ***“Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”***

In many ways the Canadian church has followed the same path as ancient Israel – fallen asleep, becoming apathetic and irrelevant to society so that the church might as well be non-existent in exposing the darkness of the culture around us. History tells us that early church in the first three centuries were effective in exposing the darkness around them, because they were a counter-culture community that was nothing like the ungodly nations around them – as a result, the early believers turned their world upside-down. So, we definitely need to continue to pray for revival and a great awakening to take place in these times in which we are living. I am optimistic about the future of the church because I believe that we are on the brink of a great revival taking place when our light will shine brighter as things get darker-and-darker. I believe our voice will be heard clearly once again when those around us have lost hope in the government, in our institutions, in our education systems and in believing that mankind can solve the world's problems, then the only solution left will be to turn to God. And that is why every believer needs to be mature in their faith, ready to step up to the plate and speak hope into the lives of others!

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is very timely – because every believer needs to realize who they are IN CHRIST and start developing and utilizing the power and authority that has been given to them as a child of God. Paul in this letter is encouraging believers to grow up, becoming mature in the faith, so that they will not be blown back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of false teaching that comes along, being caught off guard by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful schemes. The tactics that the devil uses to get us off track so that we will not only become ineffective in our witness, but also not speak against the ungodliness and ungodly laws being passed that are carrying our culture further into darkness.

Then in **verse 15-21** – Paul talks about a very important issue – making the most of our time. We are to seize each day and live with purpose, not being foolish and living as one who is unwise, because it’s easy to waste not only a day, but an entire life. It’s devastating to see an elderly person who is close to death realize they wasted their entire life and have nothing left but regrets. So, Paul is telling us, as imitators of God, don’t waste your lives as God’s representative, ***“Be very careful then, how you live (WALK & TALK) – not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil”*** (Ephesians 5:15-16). Don’t be *“sleepy Christians;”* instead, be alert and watchful, live carefully and with purpose, understanding the times and what is taking place around you. Paul tells us to seize every opportunity to do good because the days are evil. So, don’t waste another day being angry for any reason. Don’t waste another day being jealous, greedy, living in sin, or being miserable. Shake off all that darkness, and walk fully in God’s light, letting the Holy Spirit lead you into the best life you can possibly have by taking every negative thought captive, not giving the devil a foothold. Be the person God has created you to be by being strong in the Lord!

I’m sure that we can all agree that we are living in the last days before Jesus returns, and the Bible speaks a great deal about these last days in which we are living. The Bible calls them perilous times, in which the world is going to get darker-and-darker and more ungodly as evil increases. Paul describes what these last days will be like to his understudy Timothy: ***“People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people”*** (2 Timothy 3:2-5). Sounds very much like today, doesn’t it? So here in Ephesians Paul describes these kinds of people as unwise because they are not living a life that honours God!

I’m sure that we all wish there is somewhere peaceful we could escape from all the pressures of life – but that’s not going to happen. We are in this world, and God wants us to be in this world as His witness, living contrary to how unbelievers live, and that’s why we need to be careful how we live each-and-every day, not as the unwise but as the wise. It’s like the mother who had three very active children, all under the age of four, and they just about drove her crazy. To help this mother out,

a friend of hers gave her the gift of a playpen. A few days later this mother wrote a thank you note and said this, *“Thank you so much for the wonderful playpen. I love it! I sit down in the playpen in the middle of the living room and the kids can’t get to me for hours.”* We need rest, work, prayer, worship and entertainment to live a well balanced life, but we should also be able to look at our life and say, *“I believe I am in the will of God, and I believe I am fulfilling my purpose and not wasting my life.”* God has given us free will, and a certain amount of time is allotted to each of us during our lifetime. What we do with that time is our choice; thereby, free will is a huge responsibility as well as a privilege. And our choices say a great deal about us and about our heart condition. Each day is a gift from God, and it’s our choice to value it or waste it!

Since we are in this constant battle with Satan, the world and our flesh – Paul comes to this conclusion in **Ephesians 5:17**, ***“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”*** Paul says we can counteract these constant negative forces by being wise, for the wise know God’s will for their lives and who they are IN CHRIST. Being foolish has nothing to do with our intellect or academic achievements. You may have a PhD, you may be a very successful in your work, you may be rich and famous, but still be considered a fool according to **Psalm 14:1**, ***“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is not God.’”*** There are very few professing atheists in the world, but there are a great many practicing atheists in the world, who would say, *“Yes! I believe in God!”* But they live as if there is no God, and as if there is no absolute truth or accountability for their actions, so being foolish is never an intellectual problem, but always a heart issue. And our culture doesn’t help the situation either, as society is constantly trying to justify sin and diminish sin, making it look normal and an acceptable lifestyle. For example: what the Bible calls *“adultery,”* modern society calls *“an affair;”* what the Bible calls *“abortion,”* modern society calls *“a woman’s free choice;”* what the Bible calls *“sexual perversion,”* modern society calls an *“alternate lifestyle.”*

Then the foolish say that I don’t have to give an account for what I do; however, the Bible clearly says in **Hebrews 9:27**, ***“It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment.”*** There are two things we are all guaranteed in life according to God’s Word: 1) you are going to die unless Christ returns first; 2) you will have to stand before God and make an account of the time you spent on this earth. According to God’s Word, both death and judgment will take place for

every living person without exception, some will be prepared to meet their Creator, and others won't. So, Paul encourages us as believers here in **verse 17** to make sure that we are not foolish like the rest of the world, and ***“understand what the Lord's will is”*** – which is to understand the work that God has for us to do in this time He has given us, because each believer has a purpose and calling upon their lives, and will be judged one day on how they fulfilled their purpose and calling.

We had already looked at this earlier in **Ephesians 2:10** – where Paul declares, ***“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*** That means that our divine assignments were recorded for us in heaven before we were born. King David confirms this in **Psalm 139:13-16**, ***“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body, all the days ordained or were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*** You are not a mistake! You are deeply loved and cherished by God who created you!

What every believer needs to know is that God keeps books in heaven and before you took your first breath, God had already recoded every moment of your life, your divine purpose and divine calling were recorded in a book in Heaven's library with your name on the cover. And that is why Paul tells us that we need to understand what God's will is for our lives, because one day we will have to make an account of how we spent our allotted time on this earth according to what had been recorded in advance in your book before you came to be born. The question is, will we fulfill what God had planned for us? Each believer has an important part to play in God's master plan, which was revealed to us earlier in **Ephesians 1:10**, ***“to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”***

So, to summarize Paul's point here in **verses 15-17** – believers need to wake up spiritually and let the light of God's truth shine in them and through them. We are to live God-honouring lives in the following three ways: 1) by taking each step cautiously, being alert for any pitfalls, those things around us that can tempt us and trap us into sinful behaviour. We need to be like a tightrope walker, taking each

step cautiously and deliberately so we don't fall to our death; 2) by following God's lead and making the best use of the time that God has given to us, valuing His gift of life by not squandering or wasting any opportunities to serve Him; 3) by understand God's will for our lives, remembering that we may not be called to be preachers, or Bible teachers, or the next Billy Graham, but we are called to do something for His kingdom. And in regard to your calling, you'll not be judged according to what you did, but rather according to what God called you to do – what is written in God's book with your name on the cover. If you are called to work behind the scenes, that's what God will reward you with. Being the pastor, or elder, or worship leader doesn't give you extra rewards! Everyone is equal at the foot of the cross!

Now let's go on to the example that Paul gives us on how important it is for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit – **verse 18, “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery** (corruption, stupidity). ***Instead, be filled continually with the Holy Spirit.*”** The point of this verse doesn't have as much to do with intoxication by too much wine, as it has to do with intoxication by the Holy Spirit, which means being under the control or influence of the Holy Spirit. We all know that too much alcohol can negatively affect a person with slurred speech, unsteadiness, a slow reaction time, confusion, and a change in behaviour, so Paul uses this example as a teaching point. In the same way, being under the influence of the Holy Spirit can cause a timid shy person to become bold in sharing their faith and cause an introvert who isn't comfortable to speak in front of others to preach. Before Jesus ascended back to heaven, He promised His disciples that God would give them the gift of the Holy Spirit to infill them so they could carry out their divine assignment, because Jesus knew His disciples needed both equipping and a character change to carry out the work He had for them, once He ascended back to His heavenly Father!

But what does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Most believers think that every Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit, but that's not necessarily true. What is true is that every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Spirit comes to live within us when we accept Christ as our Lord and Saviour, but you may not necessarily be filled with the Holy Spirit or be under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit may remain dormant in your life! That's why Paul commands these believers in Ephesus to seek being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Many believers today aren't filled with or under the influence or control of the Spirit, like they would be under the influence of alcohol, because there are similarities. Remember what happened in **Acts 2** on the day of Pentecost, ***"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."*** As a result of their infilling these once fearful followers out of character went boldly out into the streets and started to witness and preach to the gathered crowds in their own dialects or language – with these results, ***"Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?' Some, however made fun of them and said, 'They have had too much wine.'"*** However, Peter defended their actions by saying, ***"These men are not drunk, as you suppose, but filled with the Spirit!"*** Much like the effects of alcohol, when you are filled with the Spirit, you are under its influence, and are able to do things within His power that you can't do on your own or in your own strength!

Paul is calling every believer to live under the constant influence of the Holy Spirit – because every believer needs a constant ongoing infilling, not just a one-time experience to be equipped and empowered to serve God. Think of it as sailing, since the Holy Spirit is often spoken of as *"wind"* – some believers are not filled with or live under the influence of the Holy Spirit because they haven't put up their sail to catch the wind that is constantly blowing. As a result, they are sitting dead in the water, allowing the currents of life to take them where God doesn't want them to go, or they may be relying on their small outboard motor called *"self-works"* to move them along against the wind of the Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit is like wind filling a sail that has the power to take us where God wants us to go, and all we need to do is to hoist our sails and surrender and yield to that power and allow God to fill us and take us where He wants us to go!

Then how can you tell if someone is filled with the Holy Spirit? According to **verses 19-21**, there will be a spirit of devotion and worship in that person's life. They will be filled with joy as they go about singing psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit (tongues). Plus, they will also have a grateful heart, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, and lastly, they will no longer be that difficult person that is filled with pride, self-centeredness, and arrogance, but have an attitude of cooperation and submission, being the kind of person that is a joy to work with, to live with, and to be around. If you want to be that person that knows their divine calling, God's purpose for your life? If you want to be willed with

constant joy, thankful for everything, in full surrender to God and to others? Then you need to be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit!

I want to finish with a story about the origin of streetlights. One night Benjamin Franklin went outside of his office in Philadelphia and thought it would be a good idea to have a light burning there all night long to help others find their way in the darkness, so he lit a lantern outside his office. Benjamin Franklin did not go on a campaign to put streetlights on every street in the city; he just faithfully lit his lantern every night. But when he lit his lantern every night, others saw it and thought it was a good idea. So, before long every street in Philadelphia had a streetlight and the idea caught on. That's why today, every city in North America has streetlights, all because one man said, *"I want to light up where I live."*

If every Christian that was living in God's light had the same attitude and said, *"I want to light up where I live with the light of Jesus,"* and if it caught on, just think of what our communities would be like!