



Be Aware of the Tricks

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Ephesians 5:6-11

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⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not become partners with them; ⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

(Pastor prays)

If you have just joined us, we are going into the homestretch of walking through the book of Ephesians. I have spent the year 2014 reading it, studying it, and preaching from it. There are only 10 more sermons and then it's time for Christmas.

There is a prevailing theme that emerges from what we have studied so far. And that theme is, that following Christ makes us different than people that don't follow Christ. It's not just different behavior and not just different on the inside, but following Christ is an altogether different lifestyle. All too often, as Baptist, we put a whole lot of emphasis on a one-time decision. That's getting someone to pray the sinner's prayer without giving thought to a lifetime of discipleship when genuine Christianity is both. A one-time decision is followed by a lifetime of discipline, of growing in Christ. And it is dangerously

deceptive for Christians to try to give assurance of salvation to people that have no grounds for such assurance. Here's what I mean. Throughout Ephesians, Paul emphasizes a difference. When you become a Christian there is a difference. We wouldn't cheapen our understanding of being a Christian by believing that Christ's power doesn't change a person.

With that in mind, the apostle Paul in Ephesians inserts the idea of walking as someone that is different. Paul lines them up in Ephesians. In Ephesians 2:10 Paul says, *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* And in Ephesians 4:1 he said, ¹ *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.* Ephesians 4:17 says, ¹⁷ *So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.* Ephesians 5:1-2 says, ¹ *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.* ² *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* And finally in our passage today, Paul says, ⁸ *for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.*

The Christian Life is a Changed Life

And in the world we live in, it's becoming increasingly difficult to live as a Christian because Christ changes us. Let me show you what I mean.

Christ changes who you listen to

We pick up with the warning in verse 6. ⁶ *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.* That sounds terrible. Because of these things, the wrath of God comes. So we need to ask, what things? This list is found in verses 3 through 5. Let me read that to you. ³ *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.* ⁴ *Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.* ⁵ *For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that*

is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. So let me sum that up for you. What Paul is describing in these verses is a sexually twisted, perverted, and permissive society. Without going into detail, can there be any argument that we are now entering an age of outright sexual anarchy that is rotting the fabric of our families and stunting the growth of Christians?

What Paul says in verse 6, it's scary when I think about the world I live in. And then because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Perverted love and sexual sin attract God's wrath the way in World War 2 a fully lit city would attract enemy bombers. And here, in Western society particularly, it is all too easy for believers to be influenced by the surrounding world so then what becomes acceptable to the culture becomes acceptable to the church. And in verse 6 Paul says, let no one deceive you with empty words. Empty words are words that deny the sinfulness of sin. They are words that rationalize and compromise and ease the tensions. None of us like to be argumentative or judgmental but we believe in objective truth. There is a God who is holy. He created man who became sinful. And that sin separates us from God. The New Testament teaches that Christ came and lived perfectly and died sacrificially on the cross. God raised him from the dead and he rules. And when you come to him by faith you are changed. There is a conversion, it changes who you listen to you. You don't listen to empty words anymore, you listen to God's words. In Christ, life is a changed life and it changes who you listen to.

Christ changes your relationships

That is what Paul says in verse 7. *Therefore do not become partners we have them.* Who is the "them"? Verse 6 tells us it's the sons of disobedience. Do not become partners with them. So, is Paul saying, that when you become a Christian you shouldn't associate with people that are not believers? That can't be what he meant. To understand what he is saying we need a firm handle on the word partner. The word partner in Greek means to share with, to participate with. A partner is someone who follows the example of another

one. It's the same idea that Paul is expressing in 2 Corinthians 6:14 when he says, ¹⁴ *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?* And in 1 Corinthians 15:33 he says, ³³ *Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."* This speaks to who our closest friends are, the ones we hold dearest. This is who we give ourselves to. We don't just believe the gospel, we build our relationships on the gospel. And oftentimes the gospel is the only thing that holds two people together. So that in our marriages and friendships, the gospel of Christ is shown to be true and to have the power to change. The Christian life is a changed life. Christ changes who you listen to. Christ changes your relationships.

Christ changes your nature

Notice how Paul describes this change in verse 8. Let's read it slowly and catch the nuance. ⁸ *for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.* Do you see how Christ changes the very nature of who you are? Here is a radical transformation, in essence, not just practice. And if you are not of the light, it's not possible to live in the light and enjoy it.

If you are not in Christ today, you've never given your life to Christ, or you claim to be a Christian but are not living it, you are walking in darkness and it permeates all you are. That is your total being, all you do and think, all of you is tinged with darkness, even the good and caring things you might do are hazed with darkness. But when you turn to Christ there is a radical change. Paul says it like this in Colossians 1:13. ¹³ *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.* Peter says it like this in 1 Peter 2:9. ⁹ *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* The Christian life is a changed life. Christ changes who you listen to. Christ changes our relationships. Christ changes your nature.

Christ changes your goal in life

Verses 9-10 speak to what your goals are in life. He mixes metaphors just a bit in verse 9. He was talking about light but now he is talking about fruit.

⁹ *(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)*, Walking in the light of Christ produces three things; all that is good, right, and true.

Think of it like this. Goodness describes our relationships with others. The way you treat people is done in a gospel-centered way. It's how you treat your parents, siblings, spouse, and enemies.

Righteousness is you standing before God. Are you comfortable with who you are before a holy God or do you need to turn from your sin and turn to the cross of Christ?

Truth has to do with ourselves. It is what you know about yourself that nobody else knows but God.

That's where our Christianity is seen, in the goodness, how we treat others, in righteousness, how we stand before God, and in truth, what we know of ourselves.

Paul sums it up like this in verse 10. ¹⁰ *and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.* ¹¹ *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.* In other words, make your life about serving Christ. Make it a life that is pleasing to God. A life that is God-honoring starts at the cross of Christ.

Let me explain it like this. God is the holy Creator. He created man in his own image. But that image of God in you has been so damaged that it is beyond repair. Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a perfect life, fulfilling the law. He died as our substitute. He took our punishment. God raised him from the dead. And if you confess he is Lord and believe God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

(Pastor prays)