

Ephesians 5:3-14

Introduction

- I. Scripture consistently paints a picture of salvation by grace alone through faith
- II. Scripture consistently calls us to live lives of radical holiness
 - This is a passage that has a clear call to holiness

The Passage

- I. Paul reminds us of who we are
 - A. “Children of light” (v. 8)
 - 1. God called us out of deeds of darkness and into the light of his truth
 - 2. “You are light in the Lord”
 - Christ is the true light, and as we abide in him, we become light
 - B. God’s holy people (v. 3)
 - 1. “holy” = set apart
 - 2. God called us out of practices/mindset of this world and set us apart for himself. We now belong to him as his children
 - C. We became children of light/God’s holy people by grace through an act of radical self-sacrificial love (5:2)
 - 1. A personal encounter with grace will change the way we live as we want to give ourselves to the one who gave himself for us
 - 2. Example: Jean Valjean had a personal encounter with grace, and he knew his life would never be the same after that.
- II. Paul calls us to avoid deeds of darkness (v. 3-7)
 - A. Three immoral actions (v. 3)
 - 1. Sexual immorality (Gk: “porneia”)
 - = any form of sexual activity outside context of marriage between man and woman
 - 2. Impurity: like a wound that has festered
 - 3. Greed/covetousness = always wanting more, insatiable (see 4:19)
 - The opposite of contentment: Always wanting more of world
 - 4. These three sins are repeated in v. 5
 - B. Three sins specifically related to speech (v. 4)
 - 1. Obscenity: dirty, foul, vulgar speech
 - 2. Foolish talk (lit: moronic talk)
 - empty, pointless talk that lacks all substance
 - 3. Coarse joking: witty, clever repartee that turns towards the sarcastic and vulgar
 - 4. Instead, there should be thanksgiving
 - = substantive, edifying, God-glorifying speech
 - C. In light of who we are, these things are totally inappropriate for us
 - v. 3: “not even a hint,” “improper”
 - v. 4: “out of place”:
 - v. 11: “have nothing to do with them”
 - D. Yet, these actions are rampant in the church today

1. Sexual immorality
 - a. 50% of Christian men view porn on regular or periodic basis
 - b. Almost 50% of pastors do the same
2. Greed
 - a. We have in large part bought into the consumeristic mindset that says we should always have more, the best, as soon as it comes out (phones, clothes, toys, cars, etc)
 - b. We live beyond our means in the process
3. Immoral Speech

We participate in gossip, foul language, inappropriate sarcasm, etc both in our conversations and in the shows/movies we watch
- E. Are we changing our theology to justify our involvement in these sins?
 1. A theology that holds onto grace as a nice idea, but abandons the radical call to holiness
 2. Paul might start sounding legalistic and extreme to us because we've changed our theology to justify our sin
- F. Paul's strong warning regarding these sins (v. 5-7)
 1. Paul is not referring to believers who sometimes fall into sin but rather people whose lives are fundamentally characterized by these sins (who consistently pursue these sins and don't see much of a problem with that)
 2. Such people are "idolaters" who fundamentally choose to worship something other than God
 3. See also 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21
 4. Paul warns us not to be deceived by empty words (v. 6) which say: "these sins aren't a big deal, not that serious, not eternally significant."
 5. What about Christians who struggle with addictions?

Authentic Christians can struggle with addictions, but they should live a lifestyle that has declared war on their addiction (accountability groups, accountability partners, filters on computer, daily time in the Word, prayer, etc)

III. Paul calls us to walk in the light (v. 8-14)

- A. We are not just to avoid evil; we are to proactively walk in good things
 1. Goodness
 2. Righteousness
 3. Truth
 4. Find out what pleases Lord

In every situation (every word we speak, every image we look at, every purchase we make, etc) ask ourselves: would this please Jesus?
- B. Expose the deeds of darkness
 1. Expose them in our own lives through confession
 2. Expose them in the community by humbly, gently, but firmly calling these things out for what they are, so that we are a community where things don't remain in the dark
- C. Paul's closing plea: wake up! (v. 14)

If we have fallen asleep (grown comfortable in our sin) the call is to wake up, repent, return to Christ, and he will shine his light of approval on us.
See also Romans 13:11

Discussion questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. If you are willing to share, what was the most convicting aspect of Sunday's passage/sermon?
3. On Sunday we discussed the difference between a genuine encounter with grace (ala Jean Valjean) vs. just a belief in grace as an idea, and it was argued that a genuine encounter with grace will always change you and never leave you the same. As you consider your own life and experience, how do those ideas strike you today? What questions or thoughts do they raise in you?
4. What do you think about this idea that we might change our theology to justify our lives (ie. embracing the concept of grace as an idea that lets us live however we want without really embracing the clear call to obedience and holiness)? Where have you seen this take place in your own life or in the lives of Christians around you?
5. Explain in your own words what Paul means in v. 5-6. How do we not soften his words here but also continue to hold to a gospel of salvation by grace alone?
6. As you consider your identity as "children of light" and "God's holy people," what good, righteous, and true (v. 9) things are you inspired to more proactively pursue as an antidote to the deeds of darkness?