

EPHESIANS #75 5:11-14 7-14-13

DECENT EXPOSURE

(Ephesians 5) Our study this morning will come from verses 11-14, but to give you the context we need to read last week's text first. **7-14** *Therefore do not be partakers with them;*⁸ *for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light*⁹ *(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),*¹⁰ *trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*¹¹ *Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;*¹² *for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.*¹³ *But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.*¹⁴ *For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."* Last week we saw that Christians are transformed by the saving power of Christ from darkness into light. We heard the exhortation of the Lord to walk as children of light, to bring forth the light fruit of goodness, righteousness and truth, to make it our goal to please and to know how to please the One we call our Savior. Today we simply come to the next thought in our passage which is in verse 11 The first two points on your outline are contained right there in that verse. We begin with a prohibition. There is something given here that we are not supposed to be doing and that something is participation with the unfruitful deeds of darkness. Literally the verse says that we are not to share fellowship in or with ungodliness. You may recall last week that I spoke of the big red X that God draws over immoral and godless conduct, warning us not to go near. But many of us find ourselves attracted to that big red X because of who else may be standing on it. There are nice people who are in the darkness. There are influential people living in darkness. Not only does the darkness promise some pleasant things for the flesh but it also offers companionship along the way. And when you combine the social and emotional attractions with the sensual attractions the darkness can seem irresistible. But God's word says not to participate. It means to break fellowship with whatever is in the darkness. But we often find this hard because there are people we care about back there, people we like back there, people we think we need. But God says the cost of fellowshiping in darkness is too great, far too great.

There is a phenomena in human society that has no name that I know of, but has to do with the negative effect of grouping sinners together. Dave Barry has observed this with respect to

little boys. He writes about young boys: *Individually they're okay, but if two of them get together, their combined total IQ is immediately halved, and if a third boy comes along it's halved again, and so on, so that if you have six of them, you're talking about the destructive force of a tank commanded by the brainpower of a Labrador retriever.* What Dave Barry observes in little boys and intelligence all of us have noted with bigger boys and morality. What little conscience there may be seems to measurably shrink in the midst of others who have little conscience. This is why young people in gangs will do things they would never do alone. Coming together, they pool their depravity until you have the destructive force of a tank harnessed by virtually nothing in the way of principle and conscience. You go into prisons and you will find there a collection of men and women who believe themselves to be good, righteous, caring but unfortunate people. And what typically will be their misfortune? They got caught up in a bad crowd. How a group of good people can come together and make a bad crowd I'm not sure, but I do recognize some truth in what they say. Sinners will tend to be more loyal to persons than they are to principle and so when friends head down a wrong path we just follow right along as our pains of conscience grow dimmer and dimmer. And so I ask you: which is more important - relationships or principles? Huh? That is kind of a hard question isn't it? Some of you by nature will tend to be more oriented to principles, right and wrong is what counts. Others of you will tend to be more oriented to relationships, loyalty and support is what counts. And it seems these two values are contradictory until you remember that God is a person too. And when you are tempted to walk in sin to keep fellowship with somebody living in the darkness the conflict is not between principle and relationship but between your relationship with God and your relationship with men. James 4:**4** *You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.* If you want to value relationship that is fine, just make sure its your relationship to God you value most. When you do that, when you care more about righteousness toward God than unity with men, then you will be able to say, "no." You will be able to say to anyone, "I don't do that. We don't do that. We don't participate in unscriptural activities. We cannot walk with you into the darkness, for we have been made children of the light." This is the point behind II Corinthians 6:**14a** *Do not be bound together with unbelievers.* You see, when you are bound you can't help but go where they go and do what they do. **14** *Do not be bound together with unbelievers, for what partnership have*

righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? There is an indecent participation in sin to which we are called of God to say, “no.”

Secondly now, I want you to see that there is another obligation that we have with respect to the deeds of darkness. Our text said **11** *Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them.* There is a work of decent exposure that we are called to carry out. And if we walk as children of light we will carry this out, because light naturally does reveal things doesn't it? **13** *But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light.* What does light make visible? Everything. It exposes what is good and it exposes what is bad. I recently read a story about how this woman decided to throw a surprise birthday party for her husband. She arranged for all their friends to gather in the basement of their home one early evening. When her husband got home from work he went right to the shower which he always did after work. His wife asked him, “Honey, when you get out of the shower, would you check the toilet in the basement.” So, he took his shower and immediately went to carry out his wife's request, except that he felt so good to get out of his work clothes he decided to walk down to the basement in the raw, in the buff, wearing nothing but a smile. When he got to the basement where all his friends were hiding he turned on the light and “Surprise!” Everybody was surprised. But it was the light that exposed wasn't it? It shows off the good, the bad, the ugly. And sometimes, because of that, it is not welcome at all. Look at John 3:19. You will recognize that this verse is right after the one that said God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son. Jesus is the light of the world. Now He says **19** *This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.* Interesting verse. It says that men loved darkness. Why would anybody love darkness? The verse tells us **19d** *for their deeds were evil.* And when you are engaged in evil you prefer the veil of darkness. You cherish the darkness. And how do you feel about the light? Light becomes your enemy. Anyone who comes around with light is a problem for you. **20** *For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.* The Scripture says that this is why men rejected Jesus and preferred Him dead. And this is why Ephesians 5:11 is such a challenge to us. Exposing evil by shining the light will not make us popular with everybody. Exposers are not only not liked; they put themselves in grave danger don't they? Regardless of what you think of Edward Snowden and his disclosure of the practices of the NSA, you can see the trouble he is in. That is why we are tempted to hide

our light. That is why we shrink back in the face of the world and its pressure. One man who gave his life because he exposed the evils of racism was Martin Luther King Jr. Rev. King said, “ Cowardice asks: *Is it safe?* Consensus asks: *Is it popular?* Conscience asks: *Is it right?*” And that is the question we must ask. What is right for us to do? Where ought we to shine the light of the Lord? That some won’t like it is to be understood. Jesus called us the salt of the world, not the honey of the world. And even as salt will sting when applied to a wound, so the truth will sting when applied to a dark world. But it is to this that our Lord has called us. Don’t participate but rather expose.

Now, how we expose the false and the wicked is a matter of practical importance about which Christians may disagree. The Bible says that we should expose the unfruitful deeds of darkness doesn’t it? That is not something we often think about. What exactly does it mean? Does this mean that scandal sheets like the National Inquirer are right on track? Does this mean that we ought to be doing our own Christian 60 minutes programs, looking for sin to uncover and expose? I think we can agree it doesn’t mean that, but what does it mean to be exposers in a godly sense? I must tell you that I am not altogether sure. When we get into this we are into something very delicate, ethically. How and when and why do we expose sin that we encounter? Certainly, we should never get ourselves so caught up in exposing the sins of others that we take our eyes off our own sin. My attention should first be on cleaning my own house before pointing the spotlight on the mess in yours. But it does go on to say that shining the light makes us exposers of evil. We have to consider what God means for us to do. Ought we to be pointing fingers of accusation at those who are doing wrong. Is the American Family Association doing good when it calls us to boycott Disney for their promoting of homosex? Does Operation Rescue do well to send out flyers to the patients of known abortionists letting them know what their doctor does on the side? Some say these exposing activities are wrong for believers, others say they are correct. We will look at that question in just a moment, but first let’s look at one way we expose evil that every Christian will agree is good and proper. I speak of the exposing value of a godly example. When we live as children of light we radiate light everywhere we go; and that light does its thing. Sometimes it reveals the corruption of others. The purity of a holy life puts the spotlight on moral pollution. When we are around people just like us, just as selfish, just as insensitive, just as carnal we tend not to notice our own sin. But when we get around some folks that are clearly different we can see more clearly

who and what we are. That is not a comfortable thing. And we don't always react nicely to the one whose goodness shows off our badness. I John 3:**11-12** *For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ¹² not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.* What?! Did you see that? Cain killed his brother why? Because his brother was a bad guy? No. Because he was a good guy. Abel's righteousness exposed Cain's unrighteousness and Cain dealt with the exposure problem by putting out the light. Murder for this reason is rare, but social ostracism isn't. How many straight A students have been shunned because their academic excellence was an embarrassment to others? How many young people and adults have been branded as Goody-Two-Shoes and cast out of popular society? You see, there is a certain intimidation when we get around excellence, intellectual or moral. We don't like to feel dumb, and we don't like to feel dirty. And it's easier to turn off the light than to take a bath. This is why your foul-mouthed, hard-drinking relatives and neighbors may not care to be around you even though you are nice as can be. As it is with the Master so it will be with His followers. Did Jesus intimidate folks with His superior righteousness? So much so that they had him killed for it. The purity and power of Christ exposed the superficiality and the hypocrisy of the pharisees, and like their father Cain, they hated him and killed him. John 3:**19** *This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.* Still, the light must shine on! Philippians 2 calls us to shine like stars in the midst a dark world, to radiate the brilliance of Jesus to the end that sin will be exposed and extinguished and Christ will be glorified. We expose sin first of all by example.

Shall we also seek to expose evil and error by our words? Is it right to draw attention to the evil of abortion and abortionists? To publicly expose the horrors of what they do and the deception behind it? Is it right to pinpoint advertisers who support morally degrading programs on TV? Is it right to expose deception among government or church officials? This is the question I asked earlier and I will venture an answer for you now. And my answer comes from the examples of godly men in the Scripture. Did Jesus expose sin by His awesome example only or did He actually name the sins and the perpetrators thereof? Think of a few cases. How about the cleansing of the temple? That got pretty specific there didn't it? Jesus engaged in a violent display of the sin of greed in specific merchants. Look at Matthew 23:**15** *Woe to you,*

scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

23-25 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.* ²⁴ *You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!* ²⁵ *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.* Have you seen enough? Did Jesus expose by example only? No way. Do you think His decision to expose sin directly may have led to him being put to death? Good chance. I think of another pair of New Testament heroes who were put to death. Were they killed only for their sterling lifestyles or did they say something upsetting. Think of John the Baptist. Do you remember what happened to him? He got his head served up on a platter by a king whom he publicly criticized for his sexual immorality. Stephen in Acts chapter 7 was stoned because he preached a sermon before the high priest and the Jewish Council in which he said **7:51,52** *You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.* ⁵² *Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become.* Three verses later I read that Stephen said this under the influence of the Holy Spirit. So when you come to me and say, “Pastor, I really think our church shouldn’t be so strident in our statements against sin. We really need to quit criticizing the government or the media or the abortion industry and just concentrate on showing the love of Jesus” be prepared to explain why I should take sides against Stephen the martyr and John the Baptist and Jesus the Lord. My friends, I am disturbed. I’m profoundly disturbed by how inoffensive the spiritual leadership of our day is. Myself included. I have deep respect for some of the mega-church pastors who have the ear of our president and the ear of our nation and are unwilling to say anything that may possibly offend. I thank God for the example of a man like Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was willing to expose and oppose the evil of the fuhrer. If you haven’t read the book on him by Eric Metaxas, get it. I thank God for courageous men today like James Dobson, Tony Perkins, Alan Sears and Jay Sekulow. These men have made themselves odious to the world because they have decided that shining the light means you expose the unfruitful deeds of darkness. Now you have no radio shows to preach on.

You have no pulpit to pound on. But I bet there is some aspect of your life in which you are tempted to cover your light, to hide your convictions, to wear the mask of tolerance when your true beliefs may earn you some sneers. I had a young man in our church tell me one time that if a friend got in trouble with authorities he would lie to protect his friend because he didn't want to be regarded as a rat. But again, putting people over principles is usually putting people over God, and it's ultimately not helping those people either. How might history have been different if somebody in the Third Reich, some German statesman, had taken our text seriously and exposed the intentions of Hitler? But no. Self-protection is king. And the prince of darkness continues to rule. God help us.

Now certainly brethren, there are some in the church who seem to enjoy exposing sin, who have made us cringe by the heartless and ungracious way they have attacked evil in public places. How we do this is as important as that we do it. We must follow Scriptural procedures and go to the offending parties first before we expose them to others. We need to approach this task with the right spirit about us. This is especially important when the world wants to portray believers as angry, narrow, and self-righteous. We must make sure that any offense given is the offense of the truth so that God can speak to us as He did to Samuel when he told him, "they have not rejected you, they have rejected me." And finally, we must make very sure that our example and our words match up. I know nothing which so dims the light of the church in the world than believers who aggressively preach against wickedness and then choose that way for themselves. So now we have seen the decent exposure to which we are called. There is still one more expression in our text to look at. 14 *For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."* Last week I read this definition of a preacher: "someone who talks in other people's sleep." That is why I wish I had a verse like this to quote at the end of every sermon. "WAKE UP O SLEEPER!" Just quoting the Bible. But now that you are listening I will tell you that this verse is either a loose rendition of Isaiah 60 verse 1 or else a Christian hymn. It is written in poetic meter. I will also tell you that this verse can be understood and applied two ways. First, it may be an evangelistic call. It is an invitation to those outside of Christ to come into the light. As long as you remain in unbelief you are spiritually asleep. You are even dead. But there is new life offered in Jesus. There is light where there was darkness. Life where there was death. You will see things in a whole new light. One Christian songwriter described his conversion this way. He said it's like waking up from the

longest dream. How real it seemed until God's love broke through. If you are still spiritually asleep this morning heed God's call to wake up! But then too I must warn you that I think this verse means more than that. I think there is a warning here as well. The warning is about the light of judgment. Scripture says there is a day coming when Christ will return and on that day every person of history will be raised from the dead to stand judgment before Jesus. They will arise from the dead and Christ will shine on them, not the light of saving knowledge but the light of judgement. Scripture says that everything done in secret will be made known. When you stand before God and tell him you have been a good boy and a good girl, that you were nice and sweet and obedient and loving and that is why He should let you into heaven He will pull out a dvd of your life that will leave you red-faced and terrified of the righteous judgment of God. The light will expose your pride and selfishness and hypocrisies and deceitfulness. You see, when the Scripture says that Christ will shine on you, that may be a happy thing and it may not. He will either shine on you with the saving light of His grace or He will shine on you with the exposing light of His judgement. Which do you want it to be? Jesus can shine in you now or on you later. If you are wise you choose the saving light of His grace - today. As we go to prayer, if you want that saving light shining in your life. You make this your prayer as I lead us. *"Lord Jesus, I need you. Shine your light into my life. Show me my sin, that I might repent of it and stop it. Show me also your forgiveness for that sin, your love, your life that is promised in the gospel. Let me see you as you are and love you as I ought."*

If you prayed that prayer with me, would you please just briefly lift your hand? Thank you. *Father, we bless you for your good word. Please fill us with your light that we would shine for you everywhere we go. May our lives shine forth your purity, your love. And teach us how to expose sin, to confront it boldly and graciously in such a way that honors you. Forgive us for our dim witness and our fear, and lead us to shine more brightly for Christ our great King and precious Savior.*