

“Ephesians”

Fall Series 1

Lesson 7

“Ephesians 5:1-14”

Objective: To understand the message that Paul meant to convey to his audience and then to come to understand what that message means for us today as those living in the 21st century. We will seek to ascertain what this message means and to determine how we are intended to live our lives as those who are disciples of Christ in our modern context in light of the message it contains.

Materials: We will begin by examining carefully the Greek text of Ephesians, examine other early translations such as the Syriac Peshitta, and any other sources along with the historical setting of the first century Roman world that can help us to understand the original meaning. We will then examine early interpretations and understandings and examine commentaries and modern interpretations to enlighten our understanding for our contextual situation.

Procedures

1. We will begin by translating the text from Greek into English
2. We will examine the contextual setting and seek to understand as much as we possibly can about the historical, cultural and social settings in order to understand the message.
3. From here we will seek to find out how to best apply the calling that Paul has for the early disciples to our modern contextual framework in order to do our very best to live as disciples of Christ in our modern era.
4. We will seek to understand the attitudes that we are called to have as disciples and to reflect not only the actions that are the calling of a disciple, but also to learn how to form our attitudes to reflect our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

Translation

Ephesians 5:1 **Therefore, become imitators of God as beloved children, ² and walk in love, as also Christ loved us and delivered himself for us as a fragrant smelling offering and sacrifice to God. ³ But sexual immorality and uncleanness of any kind, or greediness must not even be mentioned among you, as is fitting for holy ones, ⁴ and there is no place for filthiness, nor foolish talk, or vulgar talk, but let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ Be sure of this, recognizing that any sexually immoral person, or unclean person, or greedy person, or someone who is an idolater has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes to the sons of unbelief. ⁷ Therefore do not become a partaker with them. ⁸ For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light — ⁹ for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth — ¹⁰ proving what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather refute them. ¹² For it**


**is shameful to speak about what is done secretly; ¹³ but
everything exposed is revealed by the light, ¹⁴ for everything
is revealed by the light. Therefore, it says, arise, O sleeper,
and rise up from the dead, and Christ will give light to you.**

Lesson

Paul continues his challenging of his audience to live in a manner that is “worthy of the call.”¹ As those who have become participants in the community of Christ there is the expectation that the behavior of those individuals, in that community, will reflect that changed reality. Notice how Paul says to “become imitators.” It is not the case that there is here expressed the expectation that as if by magic one moment someone is in darkness and a servant of the evil one and then all of the sudden the person is transformed, instantly. Transformation requires effort and attentiveness on the part of the one being transformed. One must cooperate with God and strive to pursue God, not just act as if they are a plant in green house. It is often the case that people have failed to get the balance right with regard to their walk of redemption. They have either placed all the emphasis on the “doing” and none on the “being” or they have focused on grace and neglected walking in faith.

Often in today’s world, we have created the distorted perception of how grace will have been understood in the context

¹ **Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God.** CEB.



of the first century and therefore we have distorted our perception of how it impacts our lives today. For us, grace is often seen as something that is totally free, which to us means that there is no obligation on our part change; whether it be change in attitude, change in lifestyle, or change in anything else at all. Such an understanding fails to consider the contextual matrix of the world of the New Testament writings.

This distortion, then results in what might be termed “cheap grace.” Bonhoeffer writes concerning cheap grace in these terms: “Cheap Grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting for costly grace. Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjacks wares. ...Grace is represented as the Church’s inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits.² This distortion of the concept of “grace,” or “divine favor” needs to be a deep concern for all of us. Such a misunderstanding leads to our abusing God’s favor and distorting the message of the “good news” in a manner that leaves people without a changed relationship

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York NY: Collier Books Macmillan Publishing Company, 1963), p. 45.

with God, and quite possibly without salvation and redemption from their lost state.

Paul will set the gift of divine favor (grace) in a different context than this. He sets it in the context of the desire of children to imitate faithful and loving parents and he challenges his audience: **Therefore, become imitators of God as beloved children,** For Paul grace challenges its recipients to respond in some way, not simply to be takers, but to be transformed into givers of grace and not simply takers of grace. The imagery here understands that for the parent there is a tremendous price paid for the welfare and well-being of a child. A child requires constant attention over a lifetime. This biological metaphor reminds us that, as a general rule, children resemble their parents in some way. Sometimes that resemblance is not strictly in physical terms, such as in physical features, but sometimes the resemblance is in the form of mannerisms, walking, talking, and even acting like their parents. As children of God, the hope of Paul is that those children will resemble God, their Father, in characteristics that

will certainly reflect the chief characteristic of God, which is “love.”³ We are to bear the image of God.⁴

The hope of most parents is that, in time, maturity will come to their children; and the type of care and attention that parents give to their children will change and help them to evolve to match the maturity, the development, of the parents. Paul is here challenging just such growth in maturity, to those described not merely as “children,” but as “beloved” (*ἀγαπητὰ*⁵ - *agapta*) “children.” These children are challenged to manifest particularly the chief of God’s characteristics, “love.” The idea being that challenges bring progress.⁶ So Paul challenges his audience to ... ²

walk in love, as also Christ loved us and delivered himself for us as a fragrant smelling offering and sacrifice to God. One of the marks of maturity that parents can see manifested in their

³ Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, in the Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary series (Macon GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Incorporated, 2012), p. 124.

⁴ Genesis 1:26 - **Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.”** CEB.

⁵ This word is a derivative of the famous word for “love” - *agape*. There is an aspect of love here that is connected in with ideas of covenant faithfulness. This is more than mere paternity, it reflects a genuine faithfulness

⁶ Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, p. 124.

children, as they grow in maturity, is their desire to please and honor their parents.⁷

Again, as we continue in the admonitions that Paul brings to his audience, he begins to get specific so that there is no misunderstanding with regard to what his concerns are. ³ **But sexual immorality ...** Paul turns from the positive exhortations and the challenging of people to display the positive traits of their Father to those traits which are very much opposed to the nature of God. It is perhaps startling to us that Paul would begin with matters of sexuality. It is perhaps the case that today we accord far too little weight to such matters and to the effect that they have on our relationship with God and their relationship to our salvation. People today are obsessed by sex and even define their social identity in terms of their sexual preferences.

Paul understands that the sexual behaviors that he speaks against are in fact inconsistent with the attitudes and behaviors that are in alignment with the new identity of those claiming to be believers in Christ. Paul begins in this section by appealing for the audience to eliminate sexual immorality (*πορνεία - porneia*) from

⁷ Exodus 20:12 **Honor your father and your mother so that your life will be long on the fertile land that the LORD your God is giving you.** CEB. This is the first commandment that carries with it a promise. Perhaps this represents for Paul a recognition that God seeks to be our true parent.

their lives. He delivers a similar exhortation to the Gentile believers of Thessalonica when he challenges them to abstain from sexual immorality (*πορνείας - porneias*).⁸ The term that Paul uses here (*πορνεία - porneia*) has a history of being translated as “fornication.”⁹ Fornication is a term that was commonly used to refer to two unmarried people having consensual sex. The term *πορνεία - porneia* clearly encompasses premarital sex, adultery,¹⁰ sex with a prostitute¹¹ (*πορνεία - porneia*),¹² incestuous relationships (*πορνεία - porneia*), and likely anything of a sexual nature that is not defined as sex between a man and a woman who are married. The term Paul uses here is a broader term than merely fornication. It encompasses a wide variety of sexual

⁸ 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 - **God’s will is that your lives are dedicated to him. This means that you stay away from sexual immorality 4 and learn how to control your own body in a pure and respectable way. 5 Don’t be controlled by your sexual urges like the Gentiles who don’t know God.** CEB.

⁹ cf. NRSV; RSV; NKJV; KJV; Geneva Bible; Tyndale Bible.

¹⁰ Matthew 19:9 - **I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual unfaithfulness (*πορνεία - porneia*), and marries another woman commits adultery.”** CEB.

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 6:13 -3 **Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, and yet God will do away with both. The body isn’t for sexual immorality (*πορνεία - porneia*) but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.** CEB.

¹² cf. Hosea 1:2 - **When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to him, “Go, marry a prostitute (*πορνεία - porneia*) and have children of prostitution (*πορνεία - porneia*), for the people of the land commit great prostitution by deserting the LORD.”** CEB. Nahum 3:4 - **Because of the many whorings of the whore, the lovely graces of the mistress of sorceries, the one who sells nations by means of her whorings and peoples by means of her sorceries:....** CEB.

relations that are much broader than the meaning that is covered under the term fornication.

I think that perhaps the motivation for narrowing the focus of this word is to fashion a word that is more minimalist and specific: and thus to empty this word of much of its original intent by excluding more than was intended. Minimalists seek to require a specificity that is more akin to what would be found in legal documents than is to be found in letters. Such specificity would mean that Paul's letter would likely be more of a book than a letter. I have no doubt that his original audience will have understood what he meant here as did the audience of Jesus when he spoke of sexual matters. Jesus spoke of "sexual immorality" as one of the evils that flows from a heart that has been corrupted.¹³

Paul lists "sexual immorality" as one of the deeds of the flesh in Galatians,¹⁴ and it is something proscribed by the Jerusalem

¹³ Matthew 15:19 - **Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adultery, sexual sins (πορνείαι - *porneiai*), thefts, false testimonies, and insults.** CEB. Mark 7:21-23 - **"It's from the inside, from the human heart, that evil thoughts come: sexual sins (πορνείαι - *porneiai*), thefts, murders, 22 adultery, greed, evil actions, deceit, unrestrained immorality, envy, insults, arrogance, and foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from the inside and contaminate a person in God's sight."** CEB.

¹⁴ Galatians 5:19-21 - **The actions that are produced by selfish motives are obvious, since they include sexual immorality, (πορνεία - *porneia*) moral corruption, doing whatever feels good, ²⁰ idolatry, drug use and casting spells, hate, fighting, obsession, losing your temper, competitive opposition, conflict, selfishness, group rivalry, ²¹ jealousy, drunkenness, partying, and other things like that. I warn you as I have already warned you, that those who do these kinds of things won't inherit God's kingdom.** CEB.

council, where Gentiles were asked to avoid this.¹⁵ As just this cursory survey indicates illicit sexual activity was an enormous problem for new Gentile followers of Christ.¹⁶

“Adulterous relationships, men sleeping with their slave girls, incest, prostitution, “sacred” sexual encounters in the local temples, and homosexuality were all a part of everyday life.”¹⁷ In the Gentile world there was much obsession with sexual activity of a whole variety of types, and Paul indicates here that this obsession, and certainly participation in such acts, does not reflect the new status of those that have become followers of Jesus. This type of behavior is out of character for God’s beloved children. It was the case in the Jewish conceptual world that a Jewish woman was prohibited from ever being left alone with a Gentile because a Gentile cannot be trusted sexually. Gentiles were not even to be

¹⁵ Acts 15:20 - **Instead, we should write a letter, telling them to avoid the pollution associated with idols, sexual immorality, (πορνείας - *porneias*) eating meat from strangled animals, and consuming blood.** CEB.

¹⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series, (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2010), pp. 319-320.

¹⁷ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, p. 320.

trusted with animals due to the fact that they might resort to bestiality.¹⁸

Paul will then continue with his list, next moving to a more general term **and uncleanness of any kind,** This second term in Paul's list of things (*ἀκαθαρσία - akatharsia*) translated as "uncleanness" is a word used in the old covenant to refer to various kinds of ritual impurity. Jesus points to the deeper issue of the corruption in the hearts of individuals which renders them impure.¹⁹ There are a variety of thoughts and behaviors that could constitute "impurity" under the New Covenant.²⁰ It is perhaps the case that this more general term is used in order to cover a variety of things and in its indefiniteness will cover a great many things that might be questionable. If it could be considered in any way unclean Paul challenges his audience to not do those things, or to participate in them.

The next term is one that is less generic and less difficult to understand: **or greediness must not even be mentioned**

¹⁸ *Mishnah, Abodah Zarah 2.1* - "They do not leave cattle in gentiles' inns, because they are suspect in regard to bestiality. And a woman should not be alone with them, because they are suspect in regard to fornication. Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Mishnah* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 662.

¹⁹ Matthew 12:34; Mark 7:20.

²⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, p. 320.

among you, as is fitting for holy ones, Greed is not something that is difficult for us to understand, but is perhaps more difficult to recognize in our own heart. This is a very ungodly desire and Paul here seeks to inculcate in his audience the reality of a changed persona that is not merely on the surface but is a reality that penetrates to the depths of the person's being. He desires for the "holy ones" not to even have any "mention" of impropriety associated with them; here specifically "greed." The reputation of the followers of Jesus will be challenged by the reality of their behavior which must be totally beyond reproach. Paul here connects the whole of life together in his challenging of them to truly fulfill their destiny to be the "beloved children" of their heavenly Father.

Even at this, Paul is not quite finished with his list and he picks up his admonition once more. ...⁴ **and there is no place for filthiness, nor foolish talk, or vulgar talk, but let there be thanksgiving.** Paul desires for believers to eliminate any type of indecent behavior from their lives along with every type of filthy talk. "These evils are blemishes to their identity in Christ."²¹

²¹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, p. 321.

Lincoln believes that this new triad of vices should be seen as simply continuing the thought of the previous verse by making it quite explicit, a sort of, naming of sexual sins that is being forbidden. He sees this filthy talk to have some form of sexual innuendo associated with it.²² This could be talk of what is considered a bawdy or suggestive nature. There is to be no wink, wink, nod, nod talk.

This appears to be all the more likely as at verse 5 Paul will once again return explicitly to the matter of “sexual immorality” (*πόρνος - pornos*). **5 Be sure of this recognizing that any sexually immoral person, or unclean person, or greedy person, or anyone who is an idolater has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.** Paul here begins a list of those that have no inheritance, no place, in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. This is a chilling, spine-tingling passage that should perhaps make the hair stand up on the back of our neck. Paul’s words here are very pointed and abrupt. There is no subtlety nor should there be any misunderstanding. Paul is making it quite clear that any person that is defined by

²² Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, in the Word Biblical series, vol. 42 (Dallas TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1990), pp. 322-323.

these traits: **sexually immoral person, or unclean person, or greedy person, or is an idolater has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.** Such people are still in their lost state even if they would claim something different. Their lifestyle and choices indicate their true nature and indicate that they are indeed not yet “beloved children” of God.

As if Paul anticipates the objections of those who would disagree with his very frank words he continues with his reasoning. **6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes to the sons of unbelief.** He challenges his audience with the accusation that there are, some at least, who seek to deceive them with “empty,” “foolish,” or “worthless,” words. These words are described in this way not because they do not have any power or because they have no effect, but because the power and effect that they have are of no benefit to those hearing them with regard to their walk of faith. These are words that will seek to persuade people of things that will leave them in their state of lostness. These are words that will ultimately leave one to the “wrath,” or “anger” of God.

These words will not lead to the “beloved children” being obedient followers of the directions that God has set for His children. These words do not reflect the nature of God Himself and leave those who follow these empty words as disobedient, ungrateful children who do not reflect a changed identity in Christ. They continue to be “sons of unbelief.” Paul warns them not because there is no hope, but because there is still the opportunity for change, there is still the opportunity for such people to become “beloved children,” to become “believers,” and to receive the inheritance of the Kingdom of God and of Christ.


Paul challenges his audience not to become a “partaker with them.” Here he is warning them of those who spread false teachings and perhaps sound wise but in reality, deliver words that steal the heart and soul of their listeners. ⁷ **Therefore do not become a partaker with them.** Paul’s concern is that some would become partakers in the “empty words” and lose their way. Ever has it been so that the servants of the evil one serve his cause and seek to deceive and lead into darkness especially those that stand at the edge of the light and also those that even walk in the

light. It is Paul's hope that he can prepare them so that they are vigilant and thus avoid the pit that stands open before them.

Paul indicates that he believes his audience no longer walks in darkness, but he also indicates that they still have some way to go on their journey.²³ He understands that we must all seek to finish the race and complete what we started.²⁴ Paul speaks in this same way in many of his other letters. This stands as a common concern, a common theme, in the writings of Paul. He writes his letter because he is concerned that his audiences will need to complete what they began. He knows that there will be continual pressure to return to their previous way of life. A life that was familiar and provided a level of comfort that will not be

²³ Philippians 3:12-16 - **It's not that I have already reached this goal or have already been perfected, but I pursue it, so that I may grab hold of it because Christ grabbed hold of me for just this purpose. 13 Brothers and sisters, I myself don't think I've reached it, but I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. 14 The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus. 15 So all of us who are spiritually mature should think this way, and if anyone thinks differently, God will reveal it to him or her. 16 Only let's live in a way that is consistent with whatever level we have reached.** CEB.

²⁴ 2 Timothy 4:7 - **I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith. 8 At last the champion's wreath that is awarded for righteousness is waiting for me. The Lord, who is the righteous judge, is going to give it to me on that day. He's giving it not only to me but also to all those who have set their heart on waiting for his appearance.** CEB. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 - **Don't you know that all the runners in the stadium run, but only one gets the prize? So run to win. 25 Everyone who competes practices self-discipline in everything. The runners do this to get a crown of leaves that shrivel up and die, but we do it to receive a crown that never dies. 26 So now this is how I run—not without a clear goal in sight. I fight like a boxer in the ring, not like someone who is shadowboxing. 27 Rather, I'm landing punches on my own body and subduing it like a slave. I do this to be sure that I myself won't be disqualified after preaching to others.** CEB.



there in the same way in this new walk. Human beings very often seek to return to the familiar as the new and different can be frightening and uncomfortable.

Paul seeks to remind his audience of where they once were with the idea being that in reminding them of this, they will turn their back and their former existence and continue on the path of light. **8 For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light — ...** Here Paul will even go further than describing the former way of life of his audience as walking in darkness he will even define them in terms of being “darkness.” This should remind them of the transformation that has been brought about in them through the power of Jesus Christ. They are now a part of the new creation. God has begun a great work in this world²⁵ and the challenge is for those who believe in Him to continue their walk of faith and became agents of light rather than agents of darkness.

²⁵ Romans 8:22-25 - **22 We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. 23 And it's not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. 24 We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see? 25 But if we hope for what we don't see, we wait for it with patience.** CEB.

Paul makes sure that there is no doubt in the minds of his audience as to what he means by this: **9 for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, righteousness and truth — 10 proving what is pleasing to the Lord.** He seeks to ensure that his audience understands that the way he is advocating is diametrically opposed to their former way of life. Perhaps it is the case that today we think of these ancient Gentiles as savages who lived their lives in a hedonistic frenzy as in somehow a life that is opposed to the way we live our lives today. As with most things balance is critical: too much of almost anything can prove harmful. Too much water can cause death, too much oxygen can be fatal, really too much of almost anything can prove fatal.

Many today, in our modern world, in our own United States, have taken to heart these powerful and noble words from the *Declaration of Independence* and have taken them too far. *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.* Though I believe deeply that these words define rights with which people are endowed the reality of their truth is to be found in how


we define these words. They cannot, in light of the call of Christ, be used as an excuse for selfishness and pursuit of our own personal happiness at the expense of others and in a manner that disregards our calling as “beloved children” of God.

For some, these words of the *Declaration of Independence* have taken precedence over the words of Scripture and the calling of our Lord. We must never forget the order of priorities that are set before us as followers of Christ. We also must not forget that for us a priority that stands over and above our own personal happiness is to do and to be what pleases our God. Nothing must stand in the position of deflecting our fulfillment of our destiny as “beloved children” who seek to please their Father in heaven above all else. Doing this will mean that we will: ¹¹ **Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather refute them.**

These works could perhaps have many definitions in our mind if Paul had not used the word “unfruitful” (*ἀκάρποις - akarpois*).

This is a word that can be translated as “without fruit,” barren,” or metaphorically as “fruitless,” or “unprofitable.”

I think Paul uses the word here metaphorically to indicate those things that are not in some sense “profitable” in fulfilling the



goal of living in a manner that is “worthy of the calling” that his audience has received. He not only challenges his audience not to have any part in such things but to actively refute them. Believers are to oppose darkness in all of its form and fight against injustice in ways that reflect the nature of God. Of course, this fighting of injustice and darkness is always to bear the mark of the great trait of God, love. I remind us here of this cautionary element because it is really easy for human beings to engage in what they believe is fighting injustice and instead to become agents themselves of rage, anger, and hatred in a manner that does not at all reflect the nature of those called to be “believers” as God’s “beloved children.” Perspective must be maintained, and everything should come from a heart of love and compassion as a reflection of the nature of God Himself.

Paul will once again come back in his letter to the issue of speech. So often, we have come to believe the old adage that: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” I suspect we all know that nothing could be further from the truth. Words are powerful and can be extremely hurtful and damaging. Once said, or written, they cannot be undone or taken


back. Participation in what Paul sanctions here can also come about through the speaking of things that are “shameful” (αἰσχρόν - *aischron*). This is a word that also may be translated as “filthy.”

12 For it is shameful to speak about what is done secretly;

Paul makes it clear that it is inappropriate even to speak of the things that the children of darkness do in secret.

Paul then moves on to his final admonition in this section stating that: **13 but everything exposed is revealed by the light, 14 for everything is revealed by the light. Therefore, it says, arise, O sleeper, and rise up from the dead, and Christ will give light to you.** There is in these words of Paul a veiled warning that there are no secrets from God and that ultimately all will be revealed. It is perhaps in these words that one might even see Paul advocating something more than simply doing the right thing or having the right outward appearance he is advocating “becoming.” In becoming fully infiltrated by light there will be no place for darkness and there will be no fear of the revealing light of truth where all will be disclosed.

As if there is an understanding that his audience are in some sense in a stupor of sleep Paul seeks to rouse them to alertness.




Here it is not merely an alertness from some sleepy stupor however, but from death. He challenges them to arise from death and then delivers the promise that Christ will give them light. This is a light that not only uncovers and reveals but acts as a source of life. Just as light brings life and growth on the earth this light will be the source of life and growth in the children of the Kingdom of God. This is a transforming light challenging and changing those exposed to become something diametrically opposed to darkness and to the servants of darkness.

Synopsis

Paul continues his admonitions in this section with regard to challenging his audience to live into their calling. He restates that admonition given earlier in this section in terms of challenging his audience to “become imitators of God.” They are to be “as beloved children,” that walk in love, and not just any love, but in the love that was “the love” with which Christ loved us.

Paul will shift from his positive challenges to challenging some things that he sees as negative issues that must be avoided by those that are followers of Jesus. The emphasis switches, to particularly focus, upon sexual immorality. This was a huge issue among especially the Gentile believers and it even risked creating a rift between Jews and Gentiles. Jews viewed Gentiles as unclean and this was especially the case due to their propensity for loose sexual mores.

Paul will also place an emphasis on the speech and coarse talk that so often was a trait of those that were formerly Gentiles before their belief in Jesus. He challenges them in their speech to reflect light, rather than to be darkness and to be people of good



reputation in all areas of their life and in no way to bring disrepute upon the name of Christ.

They are to be people that are dominated by goodness and truth and to avoid unfruitful works that are in fact the works of darkness. They are to avoid shameful speech recognizing that light will in time reveal all things. They are challenged to awaken from their slumber and to let Christ give them light. This is a concept that is connected with rising from the dead for those who pursue this course to its completion.

Questions

1. What do you think Paul means when he challenges his audience to “become imitators of God?”
2. How do you see this section of Paul’s letter as being related to Paul’s call to live in a manner “worthy of the call?”
3. Why do you think Paul challenges his audience in a manner that seems to indicate that their following of Christ is not yet complete?
4. What are some examples that you can give of walking in love in a manner that reflects the way that Christ loved us?
5. Why do you think Paul focuses so much attention on “sexual immorality?”
6. When you think of “pornography” what comes to your mind? Why?
7. Why do you think the sexually immoral person will not have a part in the inheritance of the Kingdom of Christ?
8. When you think of the Kingdom of Christ how do you imagine it to be?
9. What are some ways that people are deceived today by “empty words?”
10. How would you describe your understanding of the wrath of God?
11. In what way do you think Paul means for us to understand that people before coming to belief in Christ were “darkness?”
12. What do you think it means for you to “walk as a child of light?”

13. What are some ways that you seek to “please” the Lord rather than yourself?

14. What are some ways that you seek to refute the unfruitful works of darkness?

15. What are some ways that believers should seek to awaken themselves and arise from the dead?

To Take Home

What is Important to know?

It is important to know that in this section Paul challenges his audience to become imitators of God. God, particularly, is noted for His love and Paul especially challenges his audience to “walk in love.” They are challenged not simply to just any kind of love, but to the kind of love described as “just as Christ loved us.” When you think of the love of Christ, what are some ways that this love challenges you to change the way you live your life?

Where is God in these words?

God is in these words challenging His children to grow in love and maturity. Paul challenges his audience to see their former way of life as a life dominated by darkness. This darkness was more than merely ignorance Paul also intended his words to convey the presence of evil that opposes the Kingdom of God and the well-being of His children. What are some ways that you see darkness in our world today?

What does any of this mean for how I live my life?

The words of Paul in this section are meant to challenge us to be people that reflect the nature, and especially the love, of our Father and of Jesus Christ who stands as the greatest example of that love. Today, we use the word “love” in so many ways and some of them are trivial and insignificant when compared with the love of Christ. Sometimes we speak of love in regard to simple things such as loving chocolate or loving ice cream. The concept that Paul intends here in using the word “love” is far more significant than that. What is a way of understanding that helps you understand the magnitude of the love of Christ?

What is the word of God calling us to do?

The word of God is calling us to live into the fullness of what it means to be “beloved children:” to reflect the reality of our true existence as followers of Christ. The word of God is calling us to be vigilant and to not lose our focus, but to live into the challenge of our calling. We must also be warned not to allow people using “empty” words to distract us from our calling to truly imitate our Father. What are some ways that we as “beloved children” can “become imitators of God?”