

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 5:8-17

Session 45: Reproving the Works of Darkness

Last week we ended with an exercise in taking the truth that we are light in the Lord and living out of that doctrine in our everyday lives, so that we “walk as children of light.”

Ephesians 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

Last week was about our behavior. We could do this same exercise with our conversations; how we talk and what we say. Instead of going over that same exercise for our conversations, let me give you an advanced application of the doctrine.

We have already seen how our speech needs to be cleaned up in Ephesians 5:1-7. But, the exhortation is not just negative, (put away filthiness, foolish talking and jesting) but it is positive too (walk as children of light). When it comes to our conversation, the things we say and the way we say them need to reflect our Savior. That way, our speech is “light in the Lord.”

And if our speech is light, it will do two things: 1) it will reprove the works of darkness (we will cover that down in verse 11), and 2) it will build up and encourage the saints.

Here is the principle: **Walk as children of light when it comes to your conversations.** That means your conversations will have a predetermined purpose. It means you will need to plan at least part of your conversations.

Think about the conversations you will have tomorrow and ask yourself how that conversation can be light.

When talking to your spouse, plan to say something that will either build them up (edify them) or encourage them.

When talking to your children, plan to say something to them that will teach them or direct them to biblical principles.

If we do not plan to have these kinds of conversations, then it is likely we never will. I am not saying you must preach a sermon to everyone. What I am saying is that the things which are “light” should be a natural part of our conversations. But to develop this skill, we need to practice it.

When you know you will be meeting someone, or they are coming over to your house, or you will be having lunch with them, think about what kind of conversation you would have, as someone who is light in the Lord. Sure, we can talk about the weather, sports, politics, current events, etc., but if we are walking as children of light in our conversations, then we will include in our conversations...what?

- **Things which edify.** Think about what you will say that will edify the people you talk to. Work to develop this skill. This is a deeper level of godly wisdom – as it is how we put the features of godly love into action. Eventually, you will become skilled at edifying others through your conversations.

What are some examples of what we can say to include “light” in our conversations?

- **Things which encourage.**
- **Things which teach or affirm.**
- **Things which demonstrate our godly love for them.**

When we talk, let our speech be light. If we talk about other people, let it be to demonstrate our love for them, our thankfulness for them, our appreciation for them, and how we value and esteem them.

If we are talking to other people, let us do those same things for them. Every conversation is an opportunity to demonstrate our love and appreciation for our fellow saints. There is a lot more to this, but I think you get the idea.

We can do this same exercise with what we think. And while you may not control every thought that comes into your mind, you do choose what to dwell on and what to keep thinking about. Let our minds reflect the light of Christ!

The realization of these things may come suddenly, like a light switch, or more slowly, like the breaking of the dawn, but the time doesn't matter. What matters is that now you are light. And you can measure every behavior and thought with this truth – I am light: is what I am about to do, or about to say, reflective of that truth?

The “rub” so to speak, is for someone who is not sure they are saved. Paul is clear: if you are saved, you are light in the Lord. This is a spiritual transaction that took place when you were saved. But what about if you are not sure about your salvation? That uncertainty will keep this truth from being applied in your everyday living. Any attempts to walk as children of light will be in the power of your flesh, and that doesn't work.

So, if you are this person, you need to settle the issue of your salvation by knowing that salvation is only found in trusting Jesus as your Savior. Salvation is not in what you do, it is in trusting what Jesus has done. We cannot save ourselves, for that would require perfection, not sinning a single time. And no one can do that.

So, we have a sin problem. God knows and He has provided a solution by sending His Son to the cross to bear the sins of the world and their punishment. He took our place. And what do we need to do in response to that? We don't ask Jesus to come into our heart, and we don't need to pray and ask God to save us. We simply believe the gospel (that Christ came into the world to save sinners) and trust what Jesus did is sufficient to satisfy God's justice against our sins.

To be saved, we do not ask Jesus to do anything, we simply trust what He has already done. He doesn't need to do anything else. If you will trust what Jesus did on the cross for your salvation, the moment you do that, God saves you.

But let me caution you, it is not Jesus plus other things. It is Jesus alone. Not Jesus plus baptism; not Jesus plus church membership; not Jesus plus good works;

not Jesus plus prayer; not Jesus plus anything else; just Jesus alone. That is why we say it this way, when you trust Jesus as your all-sufficient Savior, God counts your faith as righteousness and He justifies you unto eternal life (saves you).

If you are not sure about your salvation, then we would like to send you a video which will help you with this decision. Just contact us by phone (888) 605-3202 or by email: staff@mbiworldwide.org and request the video, *The Most Important Decision*.

Ephesians 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*⁹ (**For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;**)

Let's make a practical application of verse 9. When you get ready to engage in a conversation or behavior, ask yourself if what you are about to say or do, would your heavenly Father consider it "good?"

Based on the meaning of "goodness," I am going to ask you questions to determine "goodness."

Just looking at the scriptures which speak of God's goodness, I would define goodness as "a disposition of goodwill which actively promotes the welfare of others."

Is it morally good? Is it virtuous? Does it provide for benevolence (generosity) or beneficence (active kindness)?

The next set of questions are based on the meaning of righteousness. Is this behavior upright? Is it just? Is this morally right and proper?

The last set of questions are based on the meaning of truth. Is this faithful to the scripture? Is any part of this meant to mislead or deceive? Is this faithful to who I am in Christ? Is this in line with the character of Christ? Is this in keeping with the doctrine?

Let me put it into a nutshell: Is what I am about to do or say the result of the work of the Spirit in me? Is this a product of the word of truth effectually working in me? Am I doing this because I am light in the Lord? The more we can ask

ourselves these kinds of questions, the more we will eliminate the flesh from our godly living. And the more we do these things, the more we advance as “wise men” in the faith.

Ephesians 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰ **Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.**

By walking as children of light we are “proving,” (demonstrating or evidencing) what is acceptable unto the Lord.

Ephesians 5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.

There are two duties in verse 11: 1) to have no fellowship with the works of darkness, and 2) to reprove the works of darkness.

Let’s talk about the first one. We are to have no fellowship with the works of darkness. What is fellowship? It means to make those who perform these works of darkness feel like they are “fellows” with you, that in doing these things, they have a connection with you, that you have these things in common.

This does not mean that we cease to be civil or even friendly with the lost, for what else would they do? We are exhorted to do good unto all men, but this does not include approving of the evil which they do.

How can we have fellowship with the works of darkness?

We have fellowship with the works of darkness when we:

- 1) commit works of darkness ourselves,
- 2) if we are an accessory to the sins of others,
- 3) if we counsel or entice others to sin,
- 4) by misuse of office to command that which is evil,
- 5) by consenting to sin when we are not the principal actors,
- 6) by abetting and assisting in the conveyance of sin,
- 7) by applauding or praising the works of darkness,
- 8) by justifying sin as right, acceptable or reasonable

- 9) by tolerating sin, neglecting to reprove evil,
- 10) by carelessness to prevent sin,
- 11) by concealing evil,
- 12) by making light of evil,
- 13) by condemning those who denounce or expose the evil,
- 14) by provoking others to works of darkness (thru anger, etc.)
- 15) by teaching or instructing others on how to do evil,
- 16) by despising the light

The second duty of verse 11 is to reprove the works of darkness. In the physical world, light automatically “reproves” darkness. That is to say, it exposes that which darkness hides and drives the darkness away. It stands in stark contrast. We are called to be a reproving light. As long as we live in this world, we live in the midst of the unfruitful works of darkness, but we reprove them. When we walk as children of light, we automatically reprove the works of darkness.

So, what are these works of darkness? These are the categories of immorality which we discussed back in verses 3 and 4, which range from fornication (which is no longer done in secret) to all the deviant sexual perversions (which are working their way out of the closet).

How do we reprove the works of darkness? Two ways:

- 1) **By walking as children of light.** When we walk as children of light, we avoid sin and manifest a holy life. Children of light should abhor sin, and ensure they stand a great distance from the works of darkness.
- 2) **By what we say.** The truth of what we say needs to walk a fine line, so to speak. On the one hand, we do not want to purposefully offend or ridicule those we speak to. On the other hand, we do not want to give them the impression that works of darkness are okay, just not preferred. The goal is twofold with the lost: 1) To stop the advance of the works of darkness in the world, and 2) to convert the unsaved.

If we are talking about reproving the works of darkness performed by a believer, we again have a two-fold goal: 1) to stop the advance of the works of darkness, and 2) to recover our brother from Satan's trap.

Ephesians 5:12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

Those things which are done of whom? Who is the "them?" These are the unsaved Gentiles which were mentioned in verses 5-6, which includes those who commit these evils, and those who, through vain words, defend these evils.

Once again, Paul reminds us that these kinds of evils are not supposed to be a part of our conversations, lest we give them a foothold to corrupt either ourselves, or those who hear us who are trying to overcome the influence of these very evils.

The only other thing to say about verse 12 is that those things which used to be "done of them in secret," because there has been no reproving of the works of darkness, those things will eventually be done in public.

Ephesians 5:13 But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

The first half of verse 13 is saying, "the evils which are reproved are shown to be the evil deeds they are, because they have been exposed by the light, or because they have been compared to the godly opposite. In this way, the works of darkness are shown to be the evil they are.

The last phrase of verse 13 says, "anything that reveals the true form and nature of something is light." This is true both physically and spiritually. That which reveals the true nature of those things done by the unsaved is light. That which shows the works of darkness for what they are is light.

Ephesians 5:14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

The debate here is whether the sleepers are unsaved, who need to "wake up" and be saved, or the sleepers are saved and need to "wake up" and start living like

they are light in the Lord. I won't argue with anyone who wants to make either point, for they are both valid. As they say, "if the shoe fits, wear it."

Ephesians 5:15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

Walking circumspectly means to walk cautiously and carefully. It means we have to pay attention to what we are doing, how we are living. A "wise man" walks circumspectly.

Speaking of "walk," take a look at the "walking list."

- Walk in newness of life – Romans 6:4
- Walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit – Romans 8:1, 4
- Walk honestly – Romans 13:13
- Walk by faith – 2 Corinthians 5:7
- Walk worthy – Ephesians 4:1
- Walk not as other Gentiles – Ephesians 4:17
- Walk in love – Ephesians 5:1
- Walk as children of light – Ephesians 5:8
- Walk circumspectly – Ephesians 5:15

Ephesians 5:16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

We could spend a lot of time on this, but let me put it into bullet points. We "redeem" the time in the sense that we recover the time we have to accomplish God's purpose with us; by edification to conform us to the image of His Son.

Therefore, we redeem the time when we:

- Use it for preaching the gospel
- Use it in edifying others
- Use it for the purpose of an honest livelihood
- Use it to service the saints individually and as a body
- Use it in our own edification (of which attending the teaching of the word, reading, studying, praying, memorizing and meditating are all a part)

I am not your tutor or governor, so I will leave it up to you to decide the ways in which we are unwisely wasting our time. We only have so much time to be fully educated sons. Think about that.

Ephesians 5:17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*.

To be wise is to understand what the will of the Lord is; to know how each opportunity is to be used; to know God's purpose towards us, and to know the true purpose of life (to prepare us for the life to come).