

Children of Light

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn this morning now to our Bibles, and Edward Lobb has been preaching and leading us through Paul's letter to the Ephesians. And we come this morning to chapter 5, and we're going to read together the first 21 verses.

If you don't have a Bible, there's some at the front, some at the sides and the back. Do grab one, one of the Red Church Bibles, and you'll be able to follow along. In those Bibles, our reading, I think, is page 978.

Ephesians chapter 5, then, beginning to read from verse 1. Therefore, says the apostle, be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

Let there be no filthiness or foolish talk or crude joking which are out of place. But instead, let there be thanksgiving. 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.

[1 : 32] Let no one deceive you with empty words. For because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not associate with them.

For at one time you were darkness, but now are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true, testing and proving what is pleasing to the Lord.

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it's shameful even to speak of things that they do in secret.

But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light. And therefore it says, Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of time because the days are evil.

[2 : 43] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that's debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. Well, good morning, friends. Good to see you all.

Let's turn to Ephesians chapter 5, to our passage for this morning, which is the first section of that chapter. And we'll be studying just the first 14 verses today, 1 to 14.

Now, for any who may be here for the first time, let me take a few moments to explain what this document that we call Ephesians is.

It's a long and carefully written letter from Paul the Apostle to the church, the Christian church at Ephesus. Ephesus was an important city at the western end of what we now call Turkey.

[4 : 06] It was effectively the regional capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor. Now, a few years before writing this letter, Paul had spent a long time at Ephesus, the best part of three years.

And during that time, under God's good hand, he had seen the church there come into being, and he had painstakingly taught it. Many people at Ephesus had become Christians, out of a thoroughly pagan and godless background.

And Paul taught them both the gospel, explaining how and why God had sent Jesus into the world, and also the lifestyle that grows out of understanding the gospel.

And quite conveniently for us, Ephesians falls into two equal parts. Part one is the first three chapters, where Paul explains the gospel. And then part two is chapters four, five, and six, where Paul explains the lifestyle that the gospel produces, a lifestyle which is in sharp contrast to the pagan lifestyle from which the Ephesian Christians had been rescued.

And Paul writes with great authority, an authority given to him by Jesus himself. And this means, in effect, that Paul's instruction is the instruction of the Lord Jesus.

[5 : 24] So the Lord Jesus instructs the church, not only through his own words, recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but also through the words of his apostles, who are his true mouthpiece.

So as we listen to Paul's teaching today, we're not just hearing some distant echo of Jesus's teaching, we are hearing Jesus himself instructing us with his full authority as the Son of God. So today, in chapter five, we're halfway through the second half of the letter. And we're in the section where Paul is teaching the Ephesian Christians how to live the Christian life.

My title for this morning is Children of Light. And you'll see that I've taken that little phrase from verse eight here. Verse eight is a most thought-provoking verse.

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

[6 : 25] Now he does not say there, at one time you were in the dark. He puts it more forcefully. He says you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

In the Lord means, because of the Lord, now that you belong to him and have been incorporated into his very being. You were darkness. Darkness was your middle name.

Just look back to chapter four, verse 18 for a moment. 418. The Gentiles are darkened in their understanding. It's a chilling diagnosis. The lights have gone out.

They're like blind men who can't see the nose on their face. They have no sight of God, no sight of the meaning of human life. They're like people walking in pitch darkness towards a cliff edge without realizing the terrible danger they were in.

They were darkness. But now, back to verse eight, you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

[7 : 30] Now let me just say something about how Paul teaches Christian ethics or Christian behavior. We had a little bit of this a couple of weeks ago when I pointed out that the gospel indicatives lead directly to the ethical imperatives.

The gospel indicatives are the great statements made by Paul in chapters one, two, and three of this letter where he explains how God, motivated by divine love, has opened a way for Gentiles who are unbelievers, darkened in their minds and hardened in their hearts to be eternally saved, to be converted, turned right around from the road to hell to the road to heaven.

And God has done this by sending his son Jesus to bear the penalty of our sins on the cross where he died in our place, accepting in his own person the judgment of God that we deserved.

And Paul goes on to explain that through the death and resurrection and exaltation to heaven of Jesus, those who come to him receive complete forgiveness and the promise of eternal life.

Now that's the gospel in a nutshell. Those are the gospel indicatives. They tell us the wonderful good news, but they're immediately followed by the ethical imperatives, which in this letter begin at chapter four, verse one, where Paul says, I therefore, therefore because of the gospel, I therefore a prisoner for the Lord urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called.

[9 : 03] So they have been called. They've been called by God to belong to Jesus Christ and therefore it is now ethically imperative that they live by a completely new set of principles, which Paul proceeds to teach in chapters four, five, and six.

Now it's very important for us to see that these ethical imperatives grow directly out of the gospel indicatives. that is to say it's because God has acted so wonderfully in sending Jesus for us that we now respond in gratitude by learning to live in a manner worthy of the calling to which we've been called.

Christianity is not a moralistic rule book. It's not a man-centered, man-driven philosophy of good behavior. It's gospel. It's good news of a totally undeserved salvation given to us.

The ethical transformation that follows as a consequence of our joyfully accepting that salvation.

The gospel indicatives precede and shape the ethical imperatives.

However, we mustn't suppose that in coming to Christ we undergo an immediate ethical transformation. We know very well that we don't. If we were immediately transformed into ethically

perfect people, Paul would not have needed to write chapters four, five, and six.

[10:27] The transformation that happens to us is very real, but it's gradual and it develops and takes shape over a whole lifetime. So we read the Bible's ethical instruction and that forces us to look into our own hearts and we become more aware of sin and temptation.

We learn to recognize our own particular weak points. So we begin to take steps to avoid situations where we know we'll be strongly tempted to sin. We learn gradually to love the lifestyle that God loves and to hate the sinful behavior that he hates.

But it doesn't happen overnight. And I want us to notice Paul's characteristic way of teaching Christians how to live in a way that pleases the Lord.

It's this. He teaches them what they really are and he then urges them to live accordingly. This is what you now are, he says.

This is your new status, your new reality now that you belong to Christ. So learn to take all possible steps to live up to your new status. Look with me again at verse 8 here in chapter 5 and you'll see this very clearly.

[11:44] At one time, he says, you were darkness darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. That is your new position. It's your new status. It's your new reality. You are light.

Now look at the next sentence. So he says, walk as children of light. You are light, so your behavior must now be conformed to your status.

Let me tell you a little story which I think will help us in grasping this. As far as I know, this is a true story. Our late queen, Queen Elizabeth, had no brothers and just one sister, Princess Margaret, who was about two years younger than the queen.

And one day, the two little princesses, when they were aged about eight and six, got into the back of a Rolls Royce car to be driven to a birthday party where they were going to enjoy fun, birthday cake, and party games in the company of a number of other young children.

You know what that sort of party is like. Anyway, as the two little girls got into the back of the Rolls Royce and sat down, their mother leaned into the car and she said to them, Now remember, royal children, royal manners.

[13:00] Their real status was that they were royal children. Their father was the king, but their mother was reminding them that their behavior must match their status.

Now this is exactly Paul's method. It emerges in many places throughout his letters. So for example, look back again to chapter 4, verse 1.

4-1. I urge you to walk, that is to behave, in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. So you have been called, you've accepted the call, you've come to Christ, you now belong to him, so live in a manner that matches the call, a manner which is worthy of that call.

Sometimes Paul puts the same point negatively. So look on, for example, to chapter 4, verse 17.

Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

They are hardened, they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

[14:14] But that is not the way you learned Christ. Your new status, therefore, is that you now belong to Christ. You have learned him.

So your behavior must now match the reality of your position and you must begin to learn to reject all that futile and degraded behavior of the Gentiles. There's another example in chapter 5, verses 1 and 2.

Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us. So their real status, their new identity, is that they are now children of God.

Not only children, but beloved children. So they must live accordingly. They must now learn to imitate God's own character and to model their lifestyle on Christ, which means, according to verse 2, walking in love and being prepared to sacrifice themselves for the sake of other people.

You could sum up Paul's method of teaching Christian ethics like this. Paul is saying to the Ephesians, be what you are. Be what you are.

[15:24] You are God's children. So be imitators of God. You are light in the Lord. Chapter 5, verse 8. So walk as children of light. Let your behavior express your true status and being.

Be what you are. So as we turn to our section for this morning, beginning at chapter 5, verse 3, we're immediately immersed in both negative commands, don't behave like this and this, followed by positive commands.

So for example, in verse 4, but instead, let there be thanksgiving. Another positive command comes in verse 8, walk as children of light.

Verse 10, try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Verse 15, look carefully then how you walk.

Verse 17, understand what the will of the Lord is.

Verse 18, be filled with the Spirit. How to walk, how to behave as Christians is expressed both negatively and positively.

[16:31] And we need to get both the negatives and the positives well into our systems if we are to behave as children of light. Now, I've read this passage over many times in the last few days as I've been preparing.

And I've been asking myself not only what is Paul saying, but also why is he saying these things?

By the way, that is a good procedure in all Bible study to ask not only what, but also why.

The why question is essential. Why does Paul write like this to the Ephesians? Why does he speak so strongly about sexual immorality and impurity and filthiness and crude joking?

He did mention, he began to mention these things a bit more briefly at chapter 4, verse 19, where he speaks of the pagan Gentiles having given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

So why does Paul tackle these things? These are unpleasant and painful subjects to write about, painful and difficult for us to think about. So Paul must have had a very good reason for going into them.

[17:43] The reason must be that in Ephesus, sexual immorality of many kinds was deeply embedded in the whole culture. The Greek goddess Artemis was the patron goddess of the city.

There was a great statue of Artemis built there, which was so big that you could see it from 40 miles away. And Artemis was thought to preside over the welfare of the whole city. But she was regarded as a fertility goddess, and sex orgies were regularly associated with her worship.

And Paul had lived at Ephesus for some three years. It was, and you know that he was an acute observer of human behavior, so it wouldn't have taken him five minutes to understand what lay at the heart of Ephesian life.

Now just look back again to chapter 4, verse 19. He realized that many Ephesians had simply given themselves up to sensuality. They'd surrendered all self-restraint.

They were no longer masters of their own behavior. Sexual self-indulgence had become their great idol. So Paul realized that he had to write in very strong terms about sexual immorality.

[18:56] These Ephesians who had actually become Christians were still living there in the city, surrounded by this culture. They couldn't get away from it. Day by day, they were walking past brothels and gay clubs and grimy taverns where alcohol was fueling immorality.

And Paul knew that his beloved Christian Ephesians would be tempted. Many of them had only been recently rescued from this licentious lifestyle. They were now light, but they had to learn to walk as children of light.

They were now beloved children of God, but they now had to learn to imitate God and follow the self-sacrificial example of Christ. I think that's why we feel such a jolt between verse 2 and verse 3 in chapter 5.

Verse 2 is so lovely. It has the fragrance of heaven about it. Christ loved us, gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

And then suddenly, almost like giving us a slap in the face, Paul says, but sexual immorality must not even be named among you. And his readers must have thought, but Paul, why have you taken us there so suddenly?

[20:09] And his reply would be, but dear Ephesians, the reason is that you need to realize the seriousness of the danger that you're in. You're living amongst dangerous toils and snares.

Now let's pause for a moment to ask what Paul means by this phrase sexual immorality. We do need to be clear about this, not least because younger people here today will have heard many different and contradictory opinions about sex and marriage.

The Bible's teaching, right from the beginning of the book of Genesis, is that sexual relationship, enjoying sexual intimacy with another person, is for marriage and only for marriage.

And marriage is a lifelong, committed, permanent relationship between one man and one woman who have promised to be faithful to each other till death parts them.

And when a marriage is celebrated, the ceremony is a public ceremony. The promises are witnessed by other people. It's not just some private arrangement. And it needs to be said very clearly today that marriage involves a man and a woman.

[21 : 20] The Bible knows nothing of so-called same-sex marriage. The idea is a very contradiction in terms. And homosexual activity between two men or two women is regarded in the Bible as a defiant rebellion against God.

Sexual immorality, then, means any type of sexual relationship outside marriage. Not only homosexual activity, but extramarital sex in all its forms. And Paul seems to recognize that there are many different types of sexual immorality when he says in chapter 4, verse 19, that the pagan Gentiles are greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

There are no doubt many kinds of impurity, and Paul was well aware of them. But the Bible, we do need to understand this as well, the Bible is thoroughly positive about sex within marriage.

In the history of the Christian church, there have been times when even sex within marriage has been regarded as undesirable. And celibacy, a life without any sex, has been held up as a kind of beautiful ideal.

And as you know, in some churches, the ministers have been forced to take vows of celibacy. But that is not the Bible's way. The Bible gently and unostentatiously celebrates sex within marriage.

[22 : 43] For example, in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, Paul positively encourages Christian married couples to enjoy sex and not to deny each other. I sometimes wonder if many Christian marriages would be strengthened by a bit more of the heartwarming activity.

The fact is, every time that a man and his wife enjoy sex together, it's as though they are gently reaffirming their marriage vows. But Ephesus, in Paul's day, in that city, sexual immorality was a deeply embedded problem.

And Paul knew that many of the Ephesian Christians had been involved in that lifestyle, in that immoral behavior before their conversion. And he knew that they could quickly be drawn back into it unless they learned to walk as children of light.

And he encourages them to be very focused on the dangers, which is why he writes in verse 15, look carefully then how you walk. Take great care.

So coming back to verse 3, what is he then teaching? Well, first, he's teaching some necessary negatives. And there's going to be a great positive at the end of verse 4.

[23 : 53] The first negative concerns the way the Ephesians speak. So verse 3, Now it seems odd at first sight that Paul should say, don't speak about these things in the middle of a passage where he is speaking about these things at some length himself.

But what he clearly means is, Ephesians, you live in a society that is full of dirty joking and coarse talk about sex. This sort of talk degrades and demeans people.

It doesn't honor men and women as the very images of God. It lowers them. It cheapens them. It dehumanizes them. It is, verse 4, out of place.

There's no place for this in the speech of Christians who are learning to honor other people. The inclusion of the word covetousness in verse 3 seems a bit surprising.

And you'll see that Paul speaks of it again in verse 5, describing it as idolatry. But the context helps us to see why Paul includes covetousness here.

[25 : 13] The context is focused teaching on one subject, which is sexual immorality. Paul is not suddenly losing his focus and randomly starting to expand the Ten Commandments.

So he's using this word covetousness to describe an aspect of sexual immorality. And that is where a person covets the body of another person, becomes consumed with the desire for sexual intimacy with another person.

And that becomes a form of idolatry. And don't forget that the Tenth Commandment itself says, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife. So in verses 3 and 4, Paul is saying, learn to clean up your speech.

Crude joking and dirty innuendos have no place in the conversation of Christians. It's obvious that what comes out of our mouths expresses what goes on in our minds.

So if we learn to reject crude joking, it will help us to develop honorable thinking. Christian men will learn to think honorably about Christian women and vice versa.

[26 : 23] But Paul's negative moves into a great positive at the end of verse 4. He's saying to them, refrain from foolish talk and crude joking, but instead, in place of all that, let there be thanksgiving.

Now again, Paul is focused on his main subject. He's not suddenly and randomly saying, let's be thankful for everything, for the sunshine, the rain, for apples and pears and pork sausages and Auntie Mavis' donuts.

He's not saying that. It's not a general call to thankfulness. We get that later in the chapter at verse 20. But here at verse 4, in the heart of this focused teaching about sexual immorality, he's surely talking about thanksgiving for sex in its right place within marriage.

Paul is saying, Ephesians, there is a wrong use of our mouths and there is a right use. The wrong use is in crude joking about immoral behavior. The right use is in thanking God for the purity and joy of the marriage relationship.

So Paul is saying that the Christian fellowship should be characterized by a shared sense of thanksgiving for marriage. How then can such thankfulness be shown?

[27 : 38] How can a church like ours develop a better sense of thankfulness for marriage? Well, let me just suggest one or two ideas. Let's rejoice when people get married.

Do you know how our minister quite often announces a new engagement during a Sunday service? He's finished his other announcements. Then he looks up and he smiles and he says, and finally, I want you to know that Theodosius Smith and Jane Brown have just become engaged.

And at that point, everybody smiles because we recognize the rightness and God-giveness of marriage. And let's support married couples, especially at times when they're under pressure.

We can offer help with babysitting, looking after children for a few hours, perhaps cooking a meal for a couple who've just had a baby. Let's also continue the practice we have here at our church of helping engaged couples by offering them the advice of more experienced married couples.

We've had a system in place here for some years now which links an older couple with a couple who are preparing to be married. And it's a very good system. It helps the young couple to think about various issues which they might not have thought about otherwise.

[28 : 55] Another way of stimulating thankfulness for marriage is for Christian married couples to do marriage well. and therefore to act as a good example to younger people.

Many young adults in society around us are not marrying because they fear the commitment involved. They say, till death do us part? What if your relationship falls to pieces after a couple of years?

Let me pass on a great sentence which I heard from somebody years ago. It's not the relationship that makes the marriage. It's the marriage that makes the relationship.

friendship. That is to say, it's the fact of being married and your marriage being undergirded by solemn promises of fidelity and even more so by the grace of God who loves and approves of marriage.

It's that that makes the marriage bond strong. So young adults, don't be frightened to get married. Young men, if there is a girl that you think is wonderful and if she is a keen Christian and if her life circumstances and your life circumstances are favorable, ask her to marry you.

[30 : 06] It won't kill you. You will find, in Paul's words, that you're full of thanksgiving. You'll find that marriage is the best thing since, well, it rather predates sliced bread, doesn't it?

The best thing since Eve was introduced to Adam. But as we thank God for marriage, which is, by the way, a very powerful antidote to sexual immorality, let's be equally thankful for the godly single life which is able to steer clear of immorality by the grace of God.

Paul himself was unmarried, possibly because he'd been widowed very early in life. It would have been very rare for a young Jewish man at that time not to marry, so early widowhood is a possibility for Paul, but he was certainly unmarried during the long years of his missionary activity and he commends singleness just as much as he commends marriage.

But whether we're thinking of the godly married couple or the godly single Christian, Paul says in verse 4, let there be thanksgiving. Out with the tongue that produces crude joking and foolish talk, in with the tongue that is full of thankfulness for God's gifts of marriage and godly singleness.

So in verses 3 and 4, Paul is dealing with the way that people speak. But when he gets to verse 5, he moves to the way that people act.

[31 : 34] And what he says is intended, I think, to make his readers take a sharp intake of breath. Verse 5, For you may be sure of this, remember the Lord Jesus is speaking through these words,

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.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. the person that he particularly wants to reach with these words is the person who professes some kind of Christian faith but refuses to forsake an immoral lifestyle. He's not talking about the person who comes to Christ having repented of immorality because wherever there is repentance there is always forgiveness. That's God's way.

But it's the unrepentant that Paul is warning here and he is saying in the clearest language that if there is no repentance there is no inheritance in the kingdom of God.

He says something very similar to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Again, Corinth was an immoral city. He says there, do not be deceived neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

[33 : 10] And in both that passage and this passage he says do not be deceived. Look at Ephesians 5 verse 6. Let no one deceive you with empty words.

He knows that people are going to appear who try to counter this. What Paul means is the people who deny what he's saying are working to a false agenda, a deceptive agenda because they want to sanction sexual immorality in one or other of its forms.

I'm afraid we've seen a great deal of this deceptive speech in the last 50 years or so in the national churches of England and Scotland. Arguments which deny judgment, which deny that God will call people to account.

Arguments which deny that the wrath of God, to use Paul's phrase, comes upon the sons of disobedience. Arguments that deny that immorality is disobedience in the first place.

So people like this say, oh let people behave like that. It's loving behavior. Or else they say, Paul of course was a man of his time and his vision was limited by his strict Jewish upbringing.

[34 : 19] But today we have a wider and more genial view of humanity, a kinder view. The human race has moved on. I wish people who say these things would read their Bibles again.

I wish they'd read Ephesians 5 verse 5 and acknowledge that Paul is a true apostle of Jesus and that his words carry all the authority of the Son of God. I fear for these people.

I fear for people in senior leadership positions in the churches who have turned their back on the plain teaching of the New Testament. Friends, we need to have Paul warning us and we need when necessary to pass on his warnings to other people and let us, us not be deceived by the plausible words of those who deny Paul's teaching.

Let us not be deceived. Now, something important needs to be added here. Is Paul teaching that a person who thinks a single immoral thought or has behaved immorally in some way is disqualified from entering heaven?

Well, certainly not. If that's what he's saying, none of us could be saved. All of us have thought immoral thoughts and many have done immoral things. Everybody is subject to sexual temptation and sometimes thinks immorally about another person, covetously in that sense.

[35 : 46] It is a universal problem. The person that Paul says cannot inherit the kingdom of God is the person, just look again at verse 5, who is sexually immoral.

That is the person who persists in an immoral lifestyle and refuses to repent and leave that lifestyle behind. That person, in effect, is valuing an immoral lifestyle more than heaven.

As I said a moment ago, all of us at times will battle with sexual temptation. But if we value our heavenly inheritance, we will seek the Lord's help to turn away from sin.

And in the words of verse 10, we will try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Wanting to please Him is a great motivation for living a godly life.

Well, let's move on now to see how Paul develops his teaching further. He has first taught us that there's no place in the Christian fellowship for filthy and foolish talk. Secondly, he's taught us, and do let's be thankful for his clarity here, he has assured us that the unrepentant practice of sexual immorality will exclude a person from heaven.

[37 : 01] And now thirdly, he develops his teaching about what it means to walk as children of light. People who once were darkness, but are now light in the Lord.

So what does this mean? Well, let's notice four things from his teaching here. First, from verse 9, it means that our lives become taken up with all that is good and right and true.

So we become increasingly realigned. Our former leaning towards the dark deeds of immorality is replaced by a growing interest in and concern for all that is good and right and true.

So we learn to love what God loves because all goodness and rightness and truth originate in him.

So we learn to love good human behavior.

We learn to admire courtesy and kindness and self-sacrifice when we see it in other people. And we become bolder to live courteously and kindly and self-sacrificially ourselves.

[38 : 06] We learn to love what is beautiful and true in art, in science and in culture. Artistic creativity and scientific research are full of beautiful things but can also produce great ugliness and distortion.

Art and science can greatly enhance human life or can degrade it, can expand our thinking or can damage our thinking. Paul is saying in verse 9 that the children of light will enhance human life, will produce the fruit of light by creating around themselves and in themselves a delight in what is good and true and right.

It's a lovely picture. Then secondly, from verse 10, the children of light have a growing desire to please the Lord, to please him.

Now that is a great aim to have every day, every day, seven days a week. Just think of tomorrow morning. Monday morning at about, when does your alarm go off?

Anyway, think of that moment. The alarm goes off. It's dark still. It's cold. You feel like a dysfunctional slug. What can motivate you to haul your unwilling carcass out of your bed?

[39 : 20] Well, how about this? You say to the Lord Jesus, Lord, I want to please you today. I want to please you at work. Please you as I relax. Please you while I eat.

Please you while I spend time with my friends. Please you in my behavior with my nearest and dearest. Try praying like that at the very start of the day. It realigns the purpose of your day.

The children of light learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Third, the children of light are constantly on guard against being drawn back into immorality.

just look at verse 7. Therefore, do not associate with them, which means don't join in with the activities of the sons of disobedience.

Why not? Because, verse 8, at one time you were darkness, but that time is now over. You've drawn a line under that period of your life. You've shut the door on it.

[40 : 18] Now lock the door and throw away the key. You have a new identity now. You're light in the Lord. Lord. This means for us that we need to be very careful of the company we keep.

We may have to put a firm distance between ourselves and some of our former companions. We'll need to be very careful about what we watch on our small screens.

Better to throw your laptop into the dustbin than have it damage your imagination and your whole life by reeling you like a hooked fish into scenes of immorality and degradation.

Those who make pornography and those who use it should read verse 5 very carefully. Then fourth, the effect of being children of light is to show up the darkness of immorality for what it is.

Here's verse 11. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. Now I don't think that Paul means that the Christians at Ephesus should be like investigative journalists who go about unearthing sordid secrets.

[41 : 26] Surely he means that the lifestyle of the Christians being full of light will show up the lifestyle of the darkness for what it really is. The pagan Gentiles of Ephesus would have known all about the arrival of the church in the city and the growth of the church and they would have noticed how attractive and full of love the lifestyle of the Christians was.

And it was not difficult for them to place the two lifestyles alongside each other and to see how vastly different they were. A lifestyle of light contrasted with a lifestyle of darkness.

People quickly draw their own conclusions when they see the two together. The light exposes the darkness. And it's the same today. A church whose lifestyle is full of light will inevitably be noticed in a city that is full of darkness and immorality.

Remember Jesus' words in Matthew chapter 5 to his disciples. You are the light of the world, he says. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. So let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

The light is there to be shone in full view of other people. If people can see the lifestyle that we teach and cultivate here in our church, they will soon understand how different it is from the darkness.

[42 : 51] Glasgow in the 21st century is remarkably similar to Ephesus in the 1st century. So if people who are not Christians can see that our lives are marked by love, kindness, truthfulness, honesty, fidelity in marriage, joy, patience, self-discipline, some of them will begin to ask questions. They'll be asking, well, perhaps Christianity might be true. God does seem to have the power to transform human lives, to draw them out of the swamps of despair and darkness and life-quenching immorality.

Perhaps we too should repent and submit to Christ as our Lord. And Paul goes on to say in verses 13 and 14 that when dark things are exposed by the light, they become visible.

The light of Christ displayed by the people of Christ shows up the dark deeds of the pagan world, makes them visible. And verse 14, anything that becomes visible is light.

Paul is talking about the transforming power of the influence of Christian people, bringing light into the dark and despairing alleyways and gutters of the unbelieving world. And the evidence of this transformation is all around us here in this building this very morning.

[44 : 12] If you are a Christian, you were once darkness and now you are light. I was once darkness and I thank God that I was rescued and brought to the light.

Paul ends this section in verse 14 with a triumphant piece of poetry, perhaps a quotation from a first century Easter hymn. And in this beautiful snatch of verse, we hear the voice of an evangelist as he summons an unconverted person to new life.

The evangelist cries, Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will shine upon you. To remain unconverted is to be deeply asleep.

Worse than that, it is to be dead. Dead in trespasses and sins. Dead towards God without hope and without God in the world. But to hear the summons of the gospel and to respond to it is to be woken out of sleep.

It is to be raised from the dead and to be brought out of the darkness of immorality and paganism into the light of Christ. If any here this morning are held in the vice-like grip of sleep and darkness and death, come to the savior of the world and you will find life and light and joy.

[45 : 38] Let us bow our heads and we'll pray. Our dear heavenly father, give us grace, we pray, to turn purposefully with determination from the darkness of unbelief, from the darkness of immorality and sin and death into the light of Christ who is the light of the world and help us to walk as children of light as we bring the gospel to many in our city and we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.