

Ephesians 5:8-13 — The Light Of My Life Makes A Difference

April 27, 2014

Good morning CrossWinds. Last week was Easter. It was great Easter. I loved celebrating the greatest victory in the history of the universe. I hope it was a great celebration Sunday for you too. Today, we are back in the book of Ephesians.

The first half of the book of Ephesians talks about what God has done for us through Jesus. We are literally the most blessed beings in all of the universe through Jesus. We deserve none of it. It is all a gift by God's grace. We have it through faith.

The second half of the book of Ephesians talks about the Christian life. It describes how we are to live our new identity through Jesus. We don't live a Christian life so God will save us but out of gratefulness for God having saved us. In previous weeks we learned that we live a life of sexual purity because it honors Jesus. Our words are to build others up, not tear them down. We are to be people of truth, not liars. The devil is a liar. Jesus is a truth teller. We are not to be people addicted to greed because God is our greatest satisfaction, not money.

When we read about living the Christian life in Ephesians, we are tempted to think Ephesians is an ancient book that is out of touch with our modern times. Paul's words in the book of Ephesians are quite relevant for us today. The culture in ancient Ephesus was similar to modern American culture. Sex was huge in the city. The city was the home of the world-famous temple of Artemis, a

female deity whose worship was sexually orientated. It was a port city. It was the playhouse of sailors away from their families. It was gathering place for demonic worship. It was a city that made Vegas look tame.

It was also a materialistic city. It was the hub of commerce for most of Asia. Ephesus was filthy rich. Archaeologists tell us the Ephesians had so much jewelry they were cementing gems into their floors as decorations rather than wearing them as jewelry on their fingers. Like America, most people in Ephesus were living for their next thrill, not their next meal.

Paul writes to the church in this ancient city, that is very similar to modern America and he reminds the Ephesians about the importance of our lifestyles. For the last few weeks, we talked about *how* Christians are to be different. This morning, we learn *why* Christians live a different life.

Live in the world with a lifestyle that is different from the world.

Therefore do not become partners with them; Ephesians 5:7 (ESV)

When we read this, the first question that comes to our mind is, “What does the word *partners* mean?” Are we talking dance partners? Business partners? Marriage partners? What does it mean to not partner with the world around us?

Many people think Paul wants us to disassociate from people around us. We can only hang out with Christian friends so we are not polluted. We can only wear Christian T-shirts. We can only listen to Christian music. We can only listen to Christian radio stations. We can only read Christian books. Many people think Christians should develop a little sub-culture so we can disconnect

from the rest of culture and live in our protected bubble. The logical extension of this are the Amish. I am not banging on the Amish. Many of them love Jesus. The point I am making is their culture separates them from the world. In Pennsylvania, where I come from, the Amish plow with a horse, they have no zippers—only buttons, they always have a beard. Thankfully the women can shave. They use a horse and buggy for transportation instead of a car. They wear all black to stay separate from the world. There is one huge problem.

When you dress and act this way, you become a tourist attraction. People from miles around come to watch the Amish, not because they are so much like Jesus but because they dress and act like people 100 years ago.

While we chuckle at the Amish, it is easy for us to develop a little sub-culture that blacklists the rest of the world. We have only church friends. We only read Christian books. We pull our children out of anything that would expose them to public school kids.

That is not what Paul is telling us. Do not be partners with the world doesn't mean to not talk with people in the world and have friends in the world. It means don't join in the world's lifestyle. It doesn't mean shut the world out of your life.

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 1 Corinthians 5:9–10 (ESV)

We are to have non-Christian friends. It is ok to go to their house and when they pop in an inappropriate video, we tell them we aren't interested. We would rather play scrabble in the kitchen and ask if anyone wants to join us. It

means when someone tells a dirty joke, they laugh but we don't laugh. We don't repeat it, even if it was funny. It means when they get drunk, we don't. It means that when they are busy on Sundays with sports, we tell them sports is great but Jesus is more important than baseball practice.

Don't partner with people means don't partner with the lifestyle of the world. It doesn't mean don't talk with the world or don't hang out with people in the world. We must have relationships with folks in the world to make an impact on the world. It is a lifestyle we are talking about.

On the flip side, we have to always ask ourselves who is the better evangelist. There are non-Christian folks we can hang out with that are better evangelists than we are. We hang out with them and we find ourselves tempted to do something stupid. We hang out with them and all they want to do is drink in the bar and that is not good for a recovering alcoholic. We hang out in the car with them and they are a crazy driver. The only reason we aren't dead from a car crash is because God assigned an entire legion of angels to keep the car on the road. You hang out with them and they break out a keg of beer at an underage party. That is the time to walk away. If you find they are doing a better job of converting you to their lifestyle than you are at converting them to your lifestyle, then we should cut those people out of our life.

It is true that Jesus hung out with the tax collectors and prostitutes but he was the better evangelist. He was a better influence of them than they were on him.

God puts me in dark places so the light of my lifestyle can shine.

for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord... Ephesians 5:8 (ESV)

Paul uses the biblical metaphor of light and darkness. Paul is referring to our life before Jesus. Sin, the devil and all of life before Christ is described as darkness. Nobody in a dark world knows which direction is up. Everybody is groping around trying to figure their way. They don't know why they are here. They don't know where they are going. Try this at home. Close your eyes and walk around the house, just don't run into something or fall over. That is a picture of the entire world separated from God.

Today we call this separation from God where nobody knows what is right or wrong moral relativity and ethical relativity. Anything goes. Just don't get caught. Moral and ethical relativity is a perfect description of the world apart from Christ.

The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble. Proverbs 4:19 (ESV)

The entire world is groping around trying to figure out what is right and what is wrong. They are trying to figure out what is the purpose of life. Nothing makes sense.

Along comes Jesus. Jesus makes this bold statement.

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12 (ESV)

Do you want to know what is right and what is wrong? Do you want to know how to make right choices?



Do you want to see what it looks like to live in a relationship with God like we were intended? Look to Jesus. Jesus is God in the flesh. He is the only one on the planet living in full obedience to God, in his thoughts, actions, attitudes and motives. He is like a candle shining in the midst of a dark world. He is always making the right choice. Jesus is the light that everyone can look at how to live and they can see how to live their lives by following the light of his life.

Here is where it gets interesting. Jesus is no longer on the planet. He went back to heaven. He is at the right hand of his father answering our prayers and waiting for his time of return. The light is gone. How is anyone supposed to see what it looks like to live in a right relationship with God and to know him? Where is the light of the world now? Where do people look to see what it is like to live a life which is right and true?

Paul tells us that now, we are the light. Jesus dwells in our hearts. He is shining through us. People see what a life in relationship with God looks like by watching us. Now, instead of Jesus being the one bright light in a completely dark world, Christians are lights scattered throughout the world.



This is why it is so important that we are not partnering with the world in an lifestyle. *Our lifestyle is to shine like a light in a world of darkness like Jesus' lifestyle was light in a dark world.* This is also why it is important that we don't take ourselves out of the world. Jesus didn't take himself out of society.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)

This will help you understand why God puts Christians in places where we are lonely and we don't have many Christian friends. I talk to young adults and they have a hard time finding somebody to date that loves Jesus. All of their friends are shacking up. They are celibate and waiting for marriage. It is hard. Why did God put you around so many sinful people? The reason he puts us in morally dark places is so our lifestyle can shine like a light in the darkness. He put you in your office to intentionally live a different lifestyle around people. When we live a different lifestyle, we are light in our dark corner of the world.

Maybe you are in high school and you don't have a lot of Christian friends around you. God put you there as a light in a world of darkness. That is our purpose, to be candle in the darkness.

How do I shine in a dark place?

...Walk as children of light. (For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true) and try to find out what pleases the Lord. Ephesians 5:8-10 (ESV)

In the Bible, when it tells us to walk a certain way, walking is a Hebrew idiom meaning *the way we live*. Jesus is the light of the world. Now we are to walk like lights in the world. Paul gives us three descriptions of what it looks like to walk as a light in a world of darkness.

Goodness — Goodness deals with how we relate to other people. We are to be people that are good to others, our community and our family. Goodness involves serving our community. It involves grabbing people who are new in the community and taking them for breakfast or lunch. Goodness involves seeing people in need and taking them meals just to be good and kind. Goodness involves helping with the backpack program so kids have food over

the weekend at home. Goodness involves caring for those in need like praying for Pressley.

The world, by nature, is not about being good to people. It is about using people. It is about taking from people. When Christ is in us, he shines through us by prompting us to be good toward others just because that is the godly thing to do. When we live this way, it stands out in the dark world around us.

Rightness — It is standing up for things that are right and not going along with things that are wrong. You see someone getting picked on in school, rather than just ignoring them, you stand up for them. Your friends start to watch a movie and as you get caught up in the story the Holy Spirit begins tugging at your heart reminding you this isn't right to watch this stuff so you step away because it isn't right. You download an album from iTunes and the Holy Spirit starts pulling on your heart strings that the words aren't right. You delete it even though it cost you money. Your goal is to not do what is easier or convenient but what is right.

The other day, I took my family for burgers after church. Not only did I eat a double patty hamburger but I ate a huge plate of chili-cheese fries. I was tired after preaching and after eating that heart attack on a plate, I went into a complete carb coma. I paid my bill and calculated my tip in my head. As we were driving home, it occurred to me I did the math wrong and shortchanged the kid who was waiting on us. I should have turned around, but I admit, I didn't. I went home and fell asleep. God kept bringing it to mind that this isn't the way I should live. This was not right. God is so good. He gave me a second chance. Two days later, while I was at a restaurant for a breakfast meeting, I saw the

waiter and I knew I had to do what was right. I went up to him and apologized for under tipping him and gave him the rest of his cash. I should have done what was right the first time I realized this on my way home in the car but I didn't. As Christians, we are to be known for doing what is right, even when it costs us, even when it hurts us financially.

Truth — As Christians, we don't tell half-truths. We aren't trying to deceive. We aren't lying. We aren't promising a delivery for Monday knowing full-well we can't ship until Tuesday. It is in our advertising on eBay where we don't say our product is flawless when we know it has problems.

This is one of the reasons I am having a hard time selling my truck. Last fall, when people came to look at it, as they asked if anything was wrong with it, I felt obligated to tell them the truth. Above 50 mph the truck shakes like a leaf and the dealership tried to fix it for three months but never solved the problem. In the winter, it almost never starts unless it is plugged in. Next I showed them the repair folder with every repair I have done to it. Unfortunately, it is quite thick. For some reason, after I tell people the truth, nobody wants to buy the truck. Everyone is used to people not telling the truth, especially in the used car business. Christians aren't that way. That is how our lifestyle is different. That is how we are lights in the world.

We stand out because we want to do things that are good, we want to do what is right and the words we speak are the truth. That is really a shocker in the world. People assume we don't care about others, we aren't committed to doing what is right and we aren't committed to telling the whole truth.

Find Out What Pleases The Lord - This is a great summary of the way to live the Christian life. Put this one on your bathroom mirror. Tell this to yourself every morning you brush your teeth. What I need to do is find out what pleases the Lord and do it. The world is about pleasing themselves. We are about pleasing the Lord. We want to put a smile on Jesus' face. Putting a smile on the face of Jesus puts a smile on our face. Whatever pleases the Lord, that is my goal.

The light of my life exposes sin in lives around me.

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, Ephesians 5:11-13 (ESV)

When I was in seminary, some of you know I had a black camaro. I really liked the car. Every once in a while I would clean and wax the car to have it look its best. Here is a photo of the car after I cleaned it up to



take Cindy on one of our first dates. Even though the car had over 140,000 miles, it looked flawless... under the light of a 100 watt bulb in the garage at night. The problem was the sun. Under the sunlight all the imperfections in the finish of the car became clear. Bright light exposes flaws we don't normally see. Bright light revealed the truth about my car.

Just as sunlight revealed the flaws in my camaro, the bright life of a God-honoring lifestyle shows the flaws of sin in lives around us. While most people think their lives look pretty good, when people apart from Christ are exposed to

the light of a Christian's life with purity, truthfulness, goodness, and kindness, people realize they have some serious scratches and flaws.

People saying that before the Christian family moved into town and their kids went to high school, they thought premarital sex was normative. Everybody was doing it. Lying was acceptable because everybody did it. Fits of rage were expected. It is on every episode of Montel. Revenge is standard practice. Sarcastic remarks and crude humor are expected because that is what everybody does. Christians are different. They are building people up, not tearing them down. They are saving themselves for marriage. They are telling the truth when it hurts. They forgive and move on.

God's plan is that our lives would be known for purity and singular love of our spouse. We wouldn't be known for greed and materialism but for giving and sharing. Our marriage would not be self-centered but centered on serving and sacrificing for our spouse like Jesus served and sacrificed for us.

What happens when we live like this people can see their lives aren't good. They see their sin. They see their dysfunction. People look at our life and they don't feel too good. They wish their life was like our life.

Let's be honest. That is also one of the reasons Christians are persecuted. People don't look so good when a Christian is around so they try to snuff out his or her light. You are making them look bad. Don't freak out. That is expected. That is what God wants to happen.

Paul says it is shameful to even speak of some of the things people do in secret. Here is the deal. Don't leave here thinking our job is to expose sin in the

lives of others by talking about it. We don't need to gossip and tell all the gross details. The problem with talking about sin is it spreads sin. We have this problem in the media all the time. When we had the shoe bomber who put explosives in his shoes and tried to blow himself up, the media plastered that on everyones television screens. What happens next is we have copycat crimes. The wackos are going, "Hey, that is a great idea. I never tried putting explosives in my Nikes. I will have to try to blow up a plane that way. Thank you CNN." From this point forward we have to run our shoes through a scanner because of copycat crimes.

It is the same way with sin. We expose sin by living good lives, not by blabbing it all over the place.

The light of my life draws people to Christ.

for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Ephesians 5:13–14 (ESV)

This is a very confusing verse. The scholars have a lot of discussion on this one. The translation of the Greek could have slightly different meanings. Here is what we do know. Paul is quoting an ancient Christian hymn and we no longer have the hymn book. What is Paul highlighting from the hymn? I believe he is saying the light of our lives not only exposes sin, but the light of our life is a way God draws people to himself and transforms them.

Imagine this. Instead of putdowns and sarcasm, as a Christian, you are known as a man or woman who is always building others up. You are known as a man or woman of integrity. You are known as a man or woman who will do what is right even when it hurts. Your words are known to bless. You are not

trying to get away with Christian profanity or any kind of profanity. In addition, you are not living to buy a bigger house but you are generous and willing to share.

At first, the light of our lives enables people to see the sin. After a while, people are saying, "I want to be like you." They ask you, "What makes you different?" Why is your home so much happier than mine? Why are your kids so happy? How did you get rid of the profanity in your life? Why do you and your wife get along so well?

You have in an open door to talk about Jesus. You tell people how Jesus changed your life.

Conclusion

As I was working on this sermon, Pastor Dave and I were talking about this passage. We began thinking about the way the Gospel came to Ephesus in Acts 19. Ephesus was a dark pagan city filled with witchcraft, sex and greed. It was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. In three short years, the city was transformed. So many people turned from worshipping the goddess Artemis that the silversmiths who made souvenirs for her palace were going out of business.

How did the fourth largest city in the Roman empire completely change in three short years? Paul's preaching was obviously a big part. The other big part was the lifestyle of the Christians which was so different from the culture around them. People saw their sin for the light of Christians. People were drawn to that light and were introduced to Christ.

Gods plan hasn't changed one bit. We are trying to reach our region and beyond for Jesus. The message of Christ is the centerpiece but it is our lifestyle that shows Christ is real. It is our lifestyle that makes us stand out. It is the light of our lifestyle that makes a difference.



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