

Ephesians
Let Your Light Shine
Ephesians 5:11-14
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I remember as I am sure many of you do, the first sort of mega scandal to rock modern Christianity. It was the first mega scandal because it was the first time the Christians had a platform on television. And because of that, when the scandal hit, the repercussions were far reaching. It was the exposure of the sins of the leaders of the PTL network, Jim and Tammy Baker. Perhaps you remember those dark days as well. Tragically, they were not the last; they were merely the first in a long string of very public acts of sin. Other examples came with regularity, whether you are talking about the sins of Jimmy Swaggart or James Robinson or Paul Crouch or, in the more evangelical world, David Hawking. And more recently, of course, we have all read about the scandals in the Roman Catholic Church—the pedophilia that has rocked the Roman Catholic priesthood. And of course, closer to home, Ted Haggard, the head of an organization called the National Association of Evangelicals, an organization with which few evangelicals have any knowledge or relationship, but nevertheless, broadcast as evangelical.

When you think about that list and I am sure there are other names you could add to that list, the names run the gamut from the staunchly protestant to Roman Catholic; from charismatic to conservative evangelical; from theologically orthodox to false teachers. But whatever their specific label might be, and however orthodox their theology might or might not be, and whether they are in fact Christian at all, they all carry the label “Christian.” And so, when they fall into sexual sin, they all have one thing in common: unbelievers love it.

Unbelievers love it. Why? Because when someone well-known who also claims to be a follower of Christ becomes involved in sexual sin and that becomes known, that sin becomes a welcome excuse for unbelievers. You’ll hear something like this: “See, I knew those Christians were just hypocrites. They are really no better than we are. They may act different or try to act different, but they are exactly the same.” It’s horrific. But as horrific as all of those examples of those in leadership in some “Christian” world and as terribly public as those examples were, they are not

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the worst blight on Christianity and the name of Christ that comes because of sexual sin. Because for every one name I can list of those who are in leadership who choose sexual sin, there are countless rank in file church members who make exactly the same choices, and their sins have the same effect on the people who know them or who learn about their sin as those in leadership have in a more widespread way.

You probably have known unbelievers as I have who when you talk to them about the Christian faith, point to someone they know, a family member, a neighbor, a co-worker who espoused the Christian faith but whose life was filled with sin. And they point to that and say, “Look at that hypocrisy. I want nothing to do with that.”

You know, the devastating effect of sexual sin on the cause of God and the world with unbelievers is nothing new. It was back in the Old Testament. Turn back to 2 Samuel for a moment as we begin our study this morning. Second Samuel and I want you to look at chapter 12. Second Samuel chapter 12. This is, of course, the familiar story in the previous story: David had sinned by taking another man’s wife, Bathsheba, to himself and then having her husband, Uriah, put forward in the battle and the troops withdrawn so that all of his protection melted away and he was killed. In effect—murder. And Nathan the prophet is sent by God here in chapter 12 to confront David. And he begins by telling him a parable—a parable about a person who had just one sheep and that sheep was taken by a rich man. David becomes incensed, angry. Verse 5 says, “As surely as the LORD lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die.” In Israel, you didn’t get the death penalty for stealing but David is pronouncing his own sentence because the story was about his sin and the sins of adultery and murder were both worthy of death in Israel.

And Nathan says in verse 7, “You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul.’” I also gave you everything you needed. Verse 8. Verse 9, “Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight?” I know exactly what you have done, and he rehearses it there in verse 9. Now therefore, here are the consequences. Listen folks, David’s sins will be forgiven. You

will see that in a moment. But there were consequences of his sin the rest of his life. We live on this side of the cross and it's easy to think that there is forgiveness so I can sin with impunity and seek forgiveness. Listen, God will forgive where there is true repentance but there will often be consequences that will track you down your entire life as there were with David. And here Nathan rehearses those consequences.

But look at verse 13, in response to all that “David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’” Here is genuine repentance and if you want to read the fuller versions of David’s repentance, read Psalm 32 and Psalm 51. He really repents, “And Nathan said to David, ‘The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.’” God has forgiven you and He’s not going to insist that the death penalty be carried out against you. “‘However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.’ So Nathan went to his house.”

The child dies. Why? Because by his actions David had given place, he had given occasion, he had given excuse to God’s enemies to blaspheme. Blaspheme whom? Not David. God. Because ultimately David’s choice to sin reflected on God. God must not be good enough. He must not be wise enough. He must not be strong enough. Or maybe God is just not satisfying enough. And it gave them occasion to blaspheme God by thinking lowly of David’s God because of David’s sin.

But if it is true that our sexual sin can cause God’s enemies to blaspheme Him, it is equally true that our holy lives, our lives of purity can bring God glory. Our Lord makes this point over in the Sermon on the Mount. Turn to Matthew chapter 5. Early in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses two similes, two comparisons: verse 13 we are likened to salt of Matthew 5; and in verse 14, He says, “You are the light of the world.” Remember that Jesus had said, “I am the light of the world.” Now He says to His followers, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” You don’t light a light and hide it. Verse 16, so “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works.” What is your light? Your light is your life of good works—that is, doing the things that honor God and as that light shines before men “they will glorify your Father who is in heaven.

That is the heart of Paul's message as we conclude the paragraph on sexual sin that we have been studying in Ephesians chapter 5. Turn there with me. Paul wants us to know as he concludes this section that a life of sexual sin undermines God's mission in the world but a life of sexual purity by His followers will strengthen and accomplish that mission. Let me read for you again this paragraph one last time as we conclude our study of what has been a wonderful rich study through this magnificent section so appropriate to what we have deal in this world in which we live. Ephesians chapter 5 verse 3:

But immorality or any impurity or greed [that is covetousness] must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an 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. Therefore, do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

As we have noted over the weeks, we have studied this paragraph, the theme comes in verse 8: You were darkness, now you are light. "Walk as children of the Light." And in the context to walk as children of Light is to walk in sexual purity which is what this paragraph is about. So, if we are going to walk worthy of our Lord, worthy of our new position in Christ, that we learned about in the first three chapters, then we must walk in sexual purity. And in this passage, we

have discovered together several practical strategies that are absolutely essential in our daily battle against sexual sin and for sexual purity. Let me just remind you of these strategies. There are three of them. Number one, if we are going to win in this battle, number one we must adopt God's standard for sexual purity.

We must adopt God's standard. We saw this in verses 3 and the first part of verse 4 where we are told we must not let even a hint of those sins of sexual speech, sins of sexual thought, sins of sexual action be in our lives. Not even a hint. That's God's standard. It is not OK to tolerate a little. We need to draw the line where God draws it and frankly, it is easier to deal with a temptation of sexual sin at that level than to give it a little bit of an open door in your life.

The second practical strategy that we saw is we must use the biblical means to sexual purity. There is only one of those means given here. It is at the end of verse 4: Instead of craving what we don't have, we are to give thanks for what we do. That is the virtue to "put on" in the place of craving a person whom God has not given to us. Then we looked outside of this passage at a number of other biblical means that God gives us for fighting this temptation.

The third practical strategy begins in verse five and runs all the way down through the end of the paragraph verse 14. And the third practical strategy for gaining victory in this area for fighting sexual sin, is we must understand the proper motivation for purity. The Scripture always or almost always may be a more accurate way to say it, tells us why. Because our minds need to be changed. We need to understand why it's important that we live lives of sexual purity. And so, Paul gives us several reasons, several motivations. Now we have already covered three of these motivations under this third practical strategy. Let me just rehearse them for you. The first one is that a life of sexual sin excludes from God's Kingdom. We saw that in verse 5. If you are living a pattern of unbroken unrepentant sexual sin, Paul says in verse 5, you are not part of God's Kingdom. That means you are not a Christian. Doesn't matter how many prayers you pray. Doesn't matter how many aisles you walk, how many cards you sign, how many times you have been baptized. You are not part of the Kingdom Paul says. That's what Paul says. That's not me, that's Paul. If there is an unbroken, unrepentant pattern of sexual sin in your life. So, we ought to

avoid patterns of sexual sin because when there is a life of sexual sin, it excludes from God's Kingdom.

Verse 6 gives us a second motivation: a life of sexual sin guarantees God's judgment. Paul says don't let anybody deceive you. Don't let anybody come along with empty words and say, "Oh, it's OK. You can be a Christian and still be involved in these things." He says absolutely not. The truth is that it's on account of these things, these sexual sins I'm talking about, this is one reason God's wrath comes. And we talked about the fact that that's in the present tense: God's wrath is now being unfolded in certain ways against sin and its full display comes in the future. But sexual sin guarantees God's judgment. So, we should, as Christians, distance ourselves from that sin. We should not live a life of sexual sin.

The third motivation that we saw is in verses 7 to 10 last week and that is that sexual sin conflicts with our new nature. And Paul juxtaposes darkness and light. He says listen, you used to be darkness. Now you are light. So, it is inconsistent for a person who has become light to live in the darkness. It is inconsistent with the person you have become in Jesus Christ.

Today, we come to the fourth and final motivation for sexual purity and it's this: sexual sin undermines God's mission. Sexual sin undermines God's mission in the world. You see, we are not here just to live happy lives, just to enjoy life. We do enjoy life. Life is a gift from God but that is not the primary reason we are here. We are here to serve God's purposes to accomplish His mission and sexual sin undermines that mission. Now the main point of these verses, and by the way, this fourth and final motivation is in verses 11 through 14. And the main point of these verses comes in verse 11: "Expose the deeds of darkness." In context, a reference to sexual sin. "Expose the deeds of darkness to the Light." Why? Well, as we will see, this is connected to God's mission and to our mission. A life of sexual purity strengthens the message of the Gospel; it empowers our mission of evangelism, and it validates our witness for Christ.

And so therefore, in verse 11, Paul gives us a command—a command to expose sexual sin. Notice verse 11, "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose

them.” Now first of all, notice what we are to expose. It looks like Paul is saying the same thing in verse 11 that he said back up in verse 7. Notice in verse 7 he says, “Do not be partakers with them.” Verse 11, “Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them.” It appears at first glance, he is just saying the same thing again. In reality it is quite different because in verse 7 we are told not to partner with unbelievers in pursuing the very sins that exclude from God’s kingdom, that guarantee God’s judgment. But here in verse 11, we are told not to participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness. Now we are not talking about people partnering with people. Now we are talking about not participating in deeds.

Now what are these deeds of darkness? Well again, in the context of this paragraph, it is very clear. Go back to verses 3 and 4. The deeds of darkness are the sexual sins of speech and thought and action that Paul addresses in verses 3 and 4. In verse 12, these deeds of darkness are called “the disgraceful things that are done in secret.” That is those things done in secret that are a disgrace to talk about and certainly are a disgrace to do. So clearly then, in the context, the deeds of darkness in verse 11 is talking about sexual sins.

Notice Paul calls them unfruitful—unfruitful deeds of darkness. Remember back in verse 9, we were told we are light and that light that we have become bears fruit and that fruit is all goodness and righteousness and truth. But sexual sin doesn’t produce any fruit that’s good. Doesn’t mean it doesn’t produce any fruit, it does, a number of passages make that point: Romans 6:21 says what benefit were the things of which you are now ashamed? “For the outcome of those things is death.” There’s what sexual sin will get you. Or consider Galatians 6:8: “For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption”—decay. Let me tell you what the dark sexual sins will get you: they will get you decay and rottenness and death and more darkness. So, there is no good fruit. So, he calls them the “unfruitful deeds of darkness.” Darkness generates only more darkness, decay and ultimately spiritual death—eternal death. So then, we are expose the dark deeds of sexual sin with the light.

Now the question is how? How do we go about exposing sexual sin? There are some who read this passage and think that what Paul means here is this: that you and I should go around

confronting verbally all unbelievers for their sexual sin. I don't think that's what Paul means here. Now don't misunderstand me, that's not to say that it is inappropriate to verbally confront unbelievers for their sexual sin. In fact, there are a number of examples in Scripture of that. Let me show you several. Certainly, John the Baptist did it. Look back in Matthew 14. Matthew 14. This is what got John imprisoned and then ultimately got him beheaded for doing exactly this: verbally confronting sexual sin in an unbeliever. Matthew 14:1, you have Herod the Tetrarch, this is Herod Antipas. He hears about Jesus and at first he thinks, oh no! Is this John the Baptist raised from the dead? And so, Matthew gives us a little background: verse 3, "For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip." No before you go on, you have to know a little background. Basically, Herod Antipas had talked Herodias into leaving her husband Philip for him. That was sin in and of itself. He's involving himself and her in adultery. But it gets worse because Herodias was related to both Philip and to Herod Antipas. They were her uncles and so there is incest involved. And so notice John's response, verse 4: "For John had been saying to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her.'"

He confronted the sexual sin that was in Herod's life. That it is not inappropriate to do that in the life of an unbeliever. It can often bring the weight of sin to bear. It certainly did in Herod's life although it ended up getting John killed and there is no indication that Herod Antipas ever came to faith.

There is another example where a person did come to faith by being confronted by their sexual sin. Look at John 4. This is our Lord's example and His interchange with the woman of Samaria there at the well. You will remember the story, of course, and notice what Jesus says to her and how she responds. John 4 verse 16: Jesus said "Go, call your husband and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Now it is important to understand that Jesus knew exactly what was going on here because now He is going to tell her the truth. So, His asking her to bring her husband was not because He didn't know. It was instead to put His finger on, the finger of conviction, to confront her sexual sin. Notice what He says, verse 17: "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." So, Jesus confronts this woman over sexual sin and, of course, in her case she ends up believing in Him as the result of this interaction.

The apostles did the same thing. Look over in the book of Acts. Acts 24. I just want you to see that confronting sexual sin in the life of an unbeliever is certainly not wrong and was, on a number of occasions, done to show them their need of Christ; to show them their need of a savior; to show them their sin. Acts 24, Paul is in custody, verse 24 of Acts 24 says, “But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.” Now we don’t know if Paul directly addressed Felix’s sexual sin or not but certainly, he did in general terms. You have to understand, again a little background. Drusilla was Felix’s third wife and he had seduced her from her former husband and when Felix and Drusilla were married, Drusilla was not yet 20 years old. And so, there was clear sin involved and notice Paul, verse 25: Paul “was discussing righteousness,” God’s standard of right action, “self-control and the judgment to come.” My guess is that there were some specifics of Felix’s situation included, but regardless, he was addressing his sexual sin by confronting him about “righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come. Felix became frightened and said, ‘Go away for the present, and when I find time’” I’ll call you back.

So, it is right, it’s okay, it’s acceptable as we share the gospel with people to confront their sin, gently graciously to remind them of their desperate lack of meeting God’s standard and their need of a Savior.

Now turn back to Ephesians 5. While that is acceptable to do, here in Ephesians 5, I don’t think Paul in this place means we are to expose the sexual sin of unbelievers by verbal confrontation. Instead, I think here that Paul means that we are to expose the sexual sin of unbelievers by how we live. And I think Paul makes this clear with two clues. The first clue is the meaning of the Greek word “expose.” This word can mean “a verbal reproof” or “rebuke.” It is often used this way in both the Old and New Testaments. It is even used in Matthew 18 of what we are to do as we confront sin in the lives of others. But according to the leading Greek lexicon, the most appropriate translation in this place, is “to expose” as it is translated. Why? Well, notice it says we are to expose “them.” You see the pronoun in the English text “them”? In fact, in the Greek text there is no pronoun. It literally reads this way: “Do not participate in the deeds of darkness

but rather expose.” Expose what? Well, it has to refer back to the deeds of darkness. So, notice we are not, in this case, reproving the sinner, instead, we are exposing his sin—the unfruitful deeds of darkness. We are showing his deeds of darkness for what they really are.

That one clue. Now the second clue is what is juxtaposed to this command “to expose.” The antonym. Notice in verse 11 that “expose” is the opposite of what? Participate. Paul says don’t participate rather “expose.” So, in other words, we expose their sin by our not participating in it, but by being light in our behavior. Many of the commentators embrace this view as well.

William Hendriksen, the great commentator, write “How were they able to expose their sins and yet not mention them, verse 12? Because they are shameful. The answer which is clear from the entire context is that by means of a life of goodness and righteousness and truth, they must reveal what a vast contrast there is between the works of those who walk in the light and the works of those who walk in darkness. Andrew Lincoln writes it this way, “As they refuse to join in evil actions and display a different quality of life, they cast their illuminating beam into the dark recesses of the surrounding society and will invariably show up its immoral practices for what they are.” So, we show up the sin in the lives of others, we are light in the darkness of the lives of others by how we live—by our own moral purity. And listen, if you are a Christian, you don’t decide whether or not you are going to expose the sin in the lives of others. It just happens. It happens because you are light, and you walk in the light and light will always do what? Expose what is in the dark. It just happens. Light can’t help it. Turn on a light in the room and it will expose the darkness.

There have been a couple of times in my life when this has become very clear, that this is exactly what was happening. When I was in college and I was working in a secular job, my co-workers were very uncomfortable with the fact that my relationship with my then girlfriend was not an immoral one. That was what they talked about often. They knew that wasn’t true in my own life and yet they weren’t wanting to concede that and so they tried constantly to sort of rib me and to imply that I must be doing exactly what they were doing. Why? Because my choices confronted their own choices. The light revealed the darkness.

There was another occasion after Sheila and I were married. We moved in 1987 to California. I was a poor seminary student. I had been working on my PhD and teaching at the grad level and I didn't have hardly two nickels to rub together, and we moved to California, and it had been nine years in school, and we moved out there and, of course, California is very expensive, Southern California. And so, we rented a one-bedroom apartment with a loft, you know, that seemed extravagant to us at the time. It wasn't just a one-bedroom apartment, it had a loft. But in our apartment complex, obviously a place for young couples. Sheila and I were the only married couple we knew. All these young people were living together without marriage. We knew they were lost; we weren't making that a big issue. We were just trying to reach out to them with Christ. But as soon as they discovered we were married, they became very uncomfortable and defensive. Why? Because they needed now to defend their own choice to live together and tried to convince us of why that was so important. Because the darkness was exposed by the light. We are to expose the sexual sin of unbelievers around us by not participating but instead exposing their sin by living our lives in sexual purity. Let me just ask you very directly. Do the people in your life who know you, is your sexual purity a confrontation to them and their sin or do you fit right in? Do the people at the video store around the corner think of you as confrontation to their sin because of your choices? Do the people who are your internet provider, do they think of you as a person who is a person of purity who confronts their own moral darkness? The people at work who laugh about all the stories that they tell, do they think of you as one them or does your moral purity, not in a self-righteous way but just by virtue of the fact that you are light, confront their darkness? That is what it is supposed to be.

So, we are supposed to expose the sexual sin of unbelievers around us by not participating, by living our lives in sexual purity. Why? Well, in verses 12 to 14, Paul provides us with the reasons. Two reasons he gives us to expose sexual sin: first of all, because sexual sin is shameful. It is contrary to the will and purpose of God. Look at verse 12: "For" because; here's why you should expose it "it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret." The Greek word translated as "disgraceful" means "that which bring shame." It brings shame or disgrace even to talk in an approving way about the sexual sins they engage in in secret. That is the sins listed back up in verses 3 and 4. Well, if it is a "shame" even to speak approvingly of

them, then certainly it is a “shame” to engage in the acts themselves. They bring shame to the one who commits them, and we are, therefore, by being light, to expose that sin. That sin brings dishonor. You remember Paul in Romans 1, he is talking about God giving people over to the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that is, to all kinds of sexual sins, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. Dishonor. Shame. So, the first reason that we are to expose sexual sin by pure lives is because the sins are worthy of being exposed. They are shameful. They are contrary to the will and purpose of God.

But there is a second reason Paul gives us that we are to expose sin by our pure lives and that’s because our purity is powerful in the lives of others. Now notice “light” in this passage or our “purity” has both negative and positive effects in the lives of unbelievers. Negatively, it exposes their sin. He has already made that point. He makes it again at the beginning of verse 13, “But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light.” “All things” here refers back to the secret sexual sins, the sins committed in darkness. Darkness hides the ugliness of sin, but the light makes it visible. In other words, our pure behavior shows their sin for what it really is. Light exposes dirt.

You know that I went to a rather strict, legalistic Christian college for my undergrad years, and we had there twice a year what was called white glove in the dormitories. They didn’t actually use a white glove but essentially you were responsible, you and your roommates, to truly clean your rooms and then someone would come in and inspect every room and there were penalties if you didn’t clean them. Penalties that were strong enough that you wanted to spend the day cleaning which I hate doing but the penalties were strong enough to make sure that happened. And so we would do that all day, twice a year, and then someone would come in and inspect our rooms. Now they didn’t come in with a white glove, even though it was called that as they do in the military, but instead, they would come in because dorm rooms are notoriously, you know, the lighting is a little older, and they are not as light as they ought to be, they would come in with a flashlight or a bright light. And everywhere they would shine that light, you could see the reality. Was it clean or was it dirty? Because the light does that. The light exposes the dirt. It exposes the filth.

That's what happened when Christ came. Look back at John chapter 3. I had you turn to this text last week, John 3, verse 19. Verse 18, we are talking about the Son of God. Verse 19 of John 3, "This is the judgment, that the Light" capital "L." We are talking about Jesus Christ. "The Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil." His light—the purity of his teaching and the purity of His life showed up the darkness. It showed the filth, and they didn't like it. They ran like cockroaches when the light is turned on. "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

When Christ came, the perfect light of His life exposed the darkness around Him. And Paul's point in Ephesians 5 is the same thing should happen with us as well. The light of our purity, while nothing like that of Christ's, should expose the darkness of their lives. That's the negative thing that light does.

But notice back in Ephesians 5, our purity does something else. Not only does it do the negative thing exposing their sin, but the second half of verse 13 positively our purity, our light, transforms others into light. Look at the second half of verse 13: "For everything that becomes visible is light." It's hard to understand exactly what Paul means here but several commentators and I am inclined to agree with them, like J. B. Phillips' translation of this verse. I think it will make it clear. Let me read it to you. Here's how Phillips translates it: "It is even possible, after all it happened with you, for light to turn the thing it shines upon into light also." One commentator commenting on Phillips says this: "The disclosure of people sins through our lives enables men and women to see the nature of their deeds and some of those who have their sins exposed like that abandon the darkness of sin and respond to the light." In other words, folks, what the second half of verse 13 is saying is this: In some cases, our light, our purity only exposes their sins and like cockroaches they run for the darkness. They hate the light. But for some in whose heart God is graciously working, when they see themselves in the light of scripture, in the light even of the purity of our lives, they find what is true about us strangely attractive. Have you ever had that happen? Where an unbeliever looks at your life and its purity

and says, “I don’t know what you have, but I want that.” And they end up coming to faith in Christ because of the life of a believer. That is what Paul is saying here. Our lives of light not only expose the sins in the lives of others, they can even cause others to embrace the light. To become light.

Now Paul wraps up his argument in verse 14 and punctuates what he has been saying in this section with a quotation. Look at verse 14: “For this reason it says, ‘Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’” Now Paul introduces that quotation like the people in Ephesus knew what he was talking about. The words that he quotes here do not occur exactly like this in either the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, or the Septuagint, the Greek translation. We really don’t know exactly where Paul is quoting this from. There are several options. It may be from a paraphrase of Isaiah 60 verse 1. It may be from a first century hymn or it may be, I think this is my personal favorite, it may be from a first century hymn paraphrased from Isaiah 60 verse 1. But in the end, we don’t know. Regardless, though, the meaning of the verse is clear. This verse applies to the person who is described as being asleep, living in darkness and dead. In other words, we are talking to an unbeliever. This is addressed to an unbeliever. All the commands, all of the imperatives, are addressed to the person who is spiritually asleep, spiritually dead and spiritually living in darkness. It is an invitation to the gospel. It’s a call to conversion, to express repentance and faith in Christ. It reminds us of our own conversion and here’s the main point: It reminds us of God’s mission in the world. He sent Christ to shine the light into the darkness and to bring people from spiritual darkness and death into light and life.

You see, for the person locked in darkness, locked in spiritual sleep and spiritual death, all of which are metaphors for spiritual death by the way, there is only one hope and that is that Christ, the Light, would shine on them. Christ came to be that Light. He was prophesied to be that Light. If you go back to even the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah talks about the Messiah and His coming and he says in Isaiah 42:6 of the Messiah, the Lord now talking to the Messiah, “I am [Yahweh], I have called you [the Messiah] in righteousness. I will hold You by the hand and watch over You, and I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations.” Isaiah 49:6, again talking of the Messiah, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of

Jacob and to restore . . . Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

This is what was prophesied even by Simeon. Remember the story of Simeon in Luke 2. It is one of my favorite parts of Jesus’ childhood. This godly man named Simeon is at the temple in Jerusalem, verse 25 of Luke 2 says that he was a righteous and devout man looking for the consolation of Israel, that is the Messiah: “and the Holy Spirit” had revealed to him, verse 26, that he wouldn’t die until he had seen, actually literally seen the Messiah. And so he is waiting. Verse 27: “And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when” Mary and Joseph show up with the child Jesus to carry out for him what the law required, Simeon “took Him into his arms, and blessed God” and this is what he said: “Now Lord, You are releasing your slave to depart in peace.” I can die now “according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.” It’s a person, the Messiah. Here is Your salvation “which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, and the glory of Your people Israel.”

Jesus was to be the Light. And He was the Light. But guess what? Now that we are in Christ, Ephesians 5:8 says, “We are light.” We are now light transmitters. And light shines forth from us into every life we come across. Ever since Jesus, the Light of the world, entered our own hearts, there is in a sense the truth in saying that we have become the light of the world. And that passage we read as we began this morning from Matthew 5, Jesus says that: “You are the light of the world. . . Let your light so shine before men . . . that they may see your good works, and [seeing your good works, may] glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Folks, when we live a life of sexual purity, we confront the sexual sin in the lives of the people around us. We expose it for what it is and some of those who have their sins exposed like that will want what we have. They will be attracted to what we have, and they too will become light in the Lord. Perhaps nowhere in the New Testament is this point that Paul is making Ephesians 5 better summarized than in Peter’s first letter. Look at 1 Peter chapter 2. First Peter chapter 2, he talks about Christ as the stone, the corner stone. Verse 9 1 Peter 2: “You are a CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION.” Why? Why has God

made us all of this? “So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.” Peter says listen, here's why you have become God's child: It is so that you could radiate forth the excellencies of the One who called you out of darkness into light. How? Look at the next verse, verse 11: “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles.” He is saying the same thing that Paul is saying in Ephesians 5. We are here to be light to further the mission of God, and when we live lives of light, lives of moral purity it accomplishes that mission. The light is seen, the excellencies of the One who called us seen.

Many people in our world are lighthouse aficionados, lighthouse lovers. Go on the internet and you will see clubs and all kinds of information about lighthouses. Pictures of lighthouses. Perhaps there are some folks like that here this morning. We don't know when the first lighthouse was actually made but many hypothesize that it was the lighthouse of Alexandria. The lighthouse of Pharos. One of the seven ancient wonders of the world. The Pharos Lighthouse was really a tower built in 300 years before Christ. It was built on the island of Pharos near Alexandria, Egypt. And it was there to serve as a landmark and later as a lighthouse. Its height was somewhere between 380 feet high and 440 feet high. It was next to the two large pyramids, Great Pyramids in Egypt, the third tallest structure on Earth for more that 400 years. As the Egyptian coast was very flat, there really weren't any navigational points, so if you were into sailing, into commerce on the seas, it was very difficult to find your way. And so, this tower was constructed as a sort of point of reference for sailors to bring them home. Probably in the first century is what historians tell us, near the time that Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus, they changed the tower into a lighthouse. At the very top of this massive tower, they built at night a huge fire and they surrounded the fire with these reflective mirrors. There are ancient claims that the light from the Pharos Lighthouse could be seen up to 35 miles away. That lighthouse provided a reference point by day and in the darkness of the sea at night. A point of navigation home. In the same way, Paul says our lives of sexual purity should be like a lighthouse in a world of darkness. A point of reference leading people home to the true Light, the

true Light of the world, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Here's how Paul put it to the Philippians. He said, "Prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world." What's the condition of your light? Is it reflecting and radiating the glory of Jesus Christ in a life of moral purity? Or has the light grown dim through neglect or through unrepentant sin? You are lights in the world. Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for this passage. Thank you for this paragraph that we have looked at together over these last few weeks. Lord, these things are so important in the culture in which we live. The temptations are so constant and so real. Lord, I pray that you would seal the words of Paul to our hearts. Remind us, oh God, that these are the words of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ to us. That these are His directions to us about living pure lives in a dirty world. Father, forgive us for letting our light be dimmed by neglect or by sexual sin. Father, may we recommit ourselves even this day to live in purity so that Your cause in the world can be furthered; so that the light of our lives, both expose and draw to the Light those whom You have chosen. And Father, I pray for the person here this morning whose true condition has been exposed by this text this morning that they are not in Christ. May this be the day that they come to a true place of repentance and faith, when they are willing to turn from their sin and embrace Christ and Him alone as their only hope. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

