

Thoughts From Other Minds:

However, there is something else that happens when light comes into contact with darkness and that is that things of the dark are exposed. Even when a small match or candle is lit in a large dark room, it is surprising how much is revealed by the light. And this is the point Paul now makes:

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness but rather expose them. ... everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible.¹

Although the thought here is not entirely clear, the idea is that light makes even that which is dark become light. As Christians point out the activities of darkness by shining the light of Christ upon them, so those activities, often done **in secret**, are seen for what they are, immoral and impure (v. 5), fruitless (v. 11), and shameful (v. 12). As this light is shone upon the darkness so there is the anticipation that those in darkness may themselves turn to light, and so what is revealed becomes **light** (v. 14). In other words, Paul anticipates that the witness of the *children of light*, as they expose sin for what it is, will lead the *sons of disobedience* to see this light of the Lord and to find his love and grace. After all, this is exactly what had happened to the Ephesian Christians themselves (2:1-5).

This section is then summed up with what appears at first glance to be a biblical quotation:

This is why it is said: 'Wake up, O sleeper' rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you."

It may well have been a Christian hymn based on Isaiah 60:1. If so, then the prophet helps us see what Paul means; the prophet says: 'Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.' The very next verses in Isaiah 60 speak of darkness being over the earth and the people. But the prophet sees hope: 'but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn' (Isa. 60:2-3). Isaiah looks forward to the time which Paul has seen among the Ephesian Christians as they have turned from darkness to light with the coming of the Lord Jesus.

But Paul anticipates this continuing to happen. As light exposes darkness, so more will turn to the brightness of your [Israel: God's people's] dawn. Thus, with support from Scripture, Paul provides yet another wonderful motivation to *find out what pleases the Lord and to live as children of light*.

1. Greek: 'for all that is revealed is light'.

Paul Gardner, *Ephesians, Encouragement and Joy in Christ*, pp. 133-134.

Camperdown — Terang Presbyterian Church

15 February 2015

Sermon: "*Walking in Light*" (text: Ephesians 5:6-16)

Scripture: Ephesians 4:17-5:21

Hymns: (Rejoice!)

330 God himself is present

444 Blest are the pure in heart

285 How blest the righteous in their life

403 Jesus, lover of my soul

Sermon Notes

Introduction: We resume our studies in Ephesians in the first part of chapter five; I did say that this is in three sections; walking in love, in light and in wisdom, and that is so; however, the first part is not from verse one to verse six, as I said, but from verse one to verse five, as I meant to say, for that is where we finished!

We saw that God has forgiven us in Christ because he loves us, and so we are to imitate him, and walk in love; that the measure of real love is the love of Christ, who 'loved us and gave himself up for us', and that we are to shun false love, sexual immorality and impurity and covetousness, which shut people out of God's kingdom.

1. Bearing the fruits of light

These sections are closely interwoven. The second section begins (v. 6) with a warning arising out of the first section which leads to a command (v. 8b) to walk as children of light, and his explanation that this means bearing the fruit of light.

He warns (v. 6) 'let no one deceive you with empty words' - that these things, sexual immorality, impurity, filthiness, foolish talk, crude joking and covetousness (greed) don't matter, because they do! There are many such today, loud and intrusive and persistent, in public, in our homes through radio, newspapers, magazines, television and computers, saying that if it's between consenting adults, it's good.

Many are being deceived; it is no longer 'normal' in Western societies for people to be virgins when first married, or to married prior to sex; the new 'normal' sex first, and perhaps marriage later. Adultery is now 'having an affair' - insignificant — and marriage vows are no longer regarded as binding; divorces is 'no-fault'.

Instead of sexual morality being defined by the Bible or even by tradition, it is defined by novels, by TV shows, by Hollywood, and books and films that once would have been regarded as shameful are now promoted by the media for the vast sums of money that can be made from them. And covetousness, greed, is our national way of life; the advertising industry cultivates it, for without it the economy slumps.

But we must not be so deceived because their words are empty, false and misleading; sexual immorality and impurity — sex before marriage, homosexual sex, sex

with someone other than one's spouse and so on; and covetous matter, 'for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience (v. 6).

God created sex and marriage as the relationship for it; he made man male and female, and he solemnised their marriage; he brought her to him, and joined them in marriage. (Gen 2:22; Matt 19:4-5). This is where sex is pure and wholesome, and so when people indulge in other sexual activity his wrath 'comes' - now, and later.

God created good things—but not to have first place in our affections, in our time, in our energy. Covetousness, greed, is idolatry; if our hearts are set on 'more' then we are worshipping an idol. God will not share his glory with things; if we do not find our satisfaction in him, his wrath comes upon us, now and later.

So we should not partner with those who do such things; we are not to think about sex, or talk about it, or do it, as they do; we are to be pure and clean; we are to guard what we read, what we hear, what we watch, of the company we keep, of the jokes we listen to—and we are to reserve the first place in our hearts for God.

These things are not fitting for Christians; once we were darkness (ignorant of the truth, polluted by immorality, unhappy, pitiable); now we are light in the Lord (enlightened in the truth, holy, able to serve him in purity (v. 7). So we are to 'walk as children of light, for light bears fruit in goodness, righteousness and truth—and as we bear this fruit, we will be 'proving' or 'approving' what pleases our Lord. (v. 10).

2. Convicting the works of darkness

Pleasing him means more than not doing evil with those who do; we are to be against them: 'Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them' (v. 11). The 'works of darkness' are the things that bring God's wrath on those who do them; we are not to delight or participate in them, but to 'expose them.'

In every other place in the NT the word translated 'expose' is used in its figurative sense of 'rebuke' or 'convince/convict'. (c.f. Lk 3:19; Jn 16:8; 2 Tim 5:20) - and that must be its meaning here, for 'darkness' and 'light' are used figuratively.

It is not enough for us to avoid the wrath of God by not doing these works; we must speak, not to merely admonish or rebuke, but to convince or convict by evidence. We are to use well-chosen appropriate words so that the guilty will, by God's grace and the Holy Spirit's working, see these works as 'shameful (v. 12).

Our words are to do more: (vs. 13-14, RV) 'But all things when they are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light.' What is 'reprov'd' are those who do these things, so that they see them as they really are and repent, to be light, as we who once were darkness are now light.

God calls sinners to repentance and faith (v. 14b) by his word, and by our separation from and our speaking against the works of darkness. God's gospel words have power to awaken sinners even from the death of sin; walk as children of light, and walk in wisdom, and he will bless those who see our walk and hear our words.

My Notes:

Questions for Reflection:

1. Why are the words of those who try to persuade people that sexual immorality, impurity and the other evils that the apostle Paul mentions in Eph 5:3-5 'empty words'? Why does the apostle call these words 'empty'?
2. If we think about the wrath of God, we tend to think of it as something future—but the apostle uses the present tense: 'the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience' (Eph 5:6, ESV). Read and reflect upon Romans 1:18-32; how does the apostle see the wrath of God there as a present reality? How might we see the wrath of God on account of sexual immorality etc as a present reality in our culture?
3. How would you answer from the scriptures someone who might say that there is any such thing as sexual morality, or that sexual morality is a human construct, changeable at the will of the majority?
4. Why does covetousness, or greed, arouse God's wrath? Why is this such a dangerous sin for us in 21st century Western society?
5. Why are we to speak to attempt to convince those who are guilty of sexual immorality or covetousness (or other sins) of their guilt? How does verse 14b 'fit' with the apostle's teaching in verses 11-14a?