

OpenTheo

Ephesians 5:1 - 5:21



Ephesians - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg discusses Ephesians 5:1-21, which emphasizes the importance of walking worthily with God and putting off negative behaviors like bitterness and anger. Gregg notes that humor has its place in the Christian life but warns against using jesting and foolish talking inappropriately. He also highlights the importance of understanding the nature of God and maintaining a relationship with the Holy Spirit. Overall, the passage stresses the importance of walking in the light and steering clear of unfruitful works of darkness.

Transcript

In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, we come to an artificial chapter break. It's not a bad place to break the chapter. It's a reasonable place, but it continues with what the previous chapter began.

And therefore, we need to be reminded that in chapter 4, the chapter began with an exhortation to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. And we have already in several times in this book referenced the Christian life as a walk and different modifiers have been used as to what kind of a walk it ought to be. In chapter 4, verse 1, it must be a walk that is worthy of the calling that has been described.

That calling has been described in the first three chapters. It involves no long walking as the Gentiles walk, according to Ephesians 4. And therefore, there is a no longer part of the Christian life, as well as a newness part. There is the part that we are to do and what we are not to do.

We are supposed to walk no longer as the Gentiles, but to walk proactively, positively, worthily of God. And this two-sided thing, that we stop doing one thing and start doing another thing. Paul has gone off at the end of chapter 4 into a discussion of putting off the old man and putting on the new man.

The behaviors associated with humanity in Adam are no longer appropriate to those who have put on Christ, who have put on the new man. We are part of that new humanity in Jesus in a whole different set of behaviors that are appropriate for that. So the Christian

life is one of putting off and putting on.

Putting off that walk that was like the Gentiles' walk and putting on a walk that is worthy. So the latter verses of chapter 4 have given a variety of examples of how the old man is put off and the new man is put on. In verse 25, you put off or put away lying, and you put on telling the truth.

In verse 28, you put off stealing and you put on working and paying your own way and even giving to others. In verse 29, you put off corrupt communications out of your mouth, but you put on such communication as is good for the necessary edification and ministry of grace to the hearers. Likewise, in verse 31, we put off a whole bunch of things, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking.

But in verse 32, we put on in their place being tenderhearted and kind and forgiving one another. So these are the behaviors, both pro and con, the things that you must do and the things you must not do that are part of walking as a Christian. Now in chapter 5, there are three more exhortations to walk, and they correspond with the first three paragraphs of the chapter.

Each one of the paragraphs begins essentially with an exhortation about walking. The first paragraph in chapter 5 is verses 1 through 7, and quite early on in the first line of verse 2, it says, walk in love. The second paragraph in chapter 5 is verses 8 through 14, and it begins by saying that we should walk as children of light.

And the third paragraph in the chapter is verses 15 through 21, and it says we should walk circumspectly. So each paragraph in the beginning of this chapter, continued on with the motif of walking that was introduced in chapter 4, tells us something about the Christian walk, what it means to walk worthy. You need to walk in love, you need to walk as children of light, and it's necessary to walk circumspectly.

Now there's a paragraph given to each of these topics, and so chapter 5, verse 1, begins this way. Therefore, be followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be even named among you, as is fitting for saints.

Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. But 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. Now the first exhortation in the chapter is the followers, or better translation, imitators of God. Followers, of course, I mean, especially

when you're thinking in terms of walking.

Many times people walk behind someone else or following them, and children often do walk behind their parents, though perhaps more commonly they walk alongside their parents in this society. And they take the same steps their parents do in some measure, figuratively as well. But the word here isn't follow.

In the Greek it's a word that's related to our English word mimic, and has the same root in the Greek. And it means to imitate, to ape, to do what another person does. And he says, be mimickers or be imitators of God as dear children.

The assumption is that children in the natural mimic their parents, and those who are children of God must mimic God. Now the mimicry of a parent by a child is something that Jesus takes for granted as almost universal in his teaching in John chapter 5, because Jesus was criticized there for healing a man on the Sabbath day. It's not the only time he did so, or the only time he was criticized for doing so.

But on this occasion, when he was challenged that he had done this on the Sabbath, he answered with these words, John 5, 17, My father has been working until now, and I have been working. And then we read of the Jews' further hostile reaction to that remark, and he continues to explain in verse 19, Most assuredly I say to you, the son can do nothing of himself but what he sees the father do. For whatever he does, the son also does in like manner.

Now what he's saying is that of course he is the son of God, the father. And the son in every case does what he sees his father do. He's speaking generically here.

He's not only speaking about himself, notwithstanding the capitalization in the New King James, the capitalization as the translators swim, not always a whim, sometimes there's a reason for doing it, but it's not found in the Greek. And therefore you could take the words father and son there in the non-proper sense, not as proper names as it were of Jesus and God, but rather just of fathers and sons generically. That the son can do nothing by himself.

He's not born with intuitive knowledge of how to do the father's business. Jesus was raised in a home with a carpenter, and he learned carpentry, but he wasn't born knowing how to do carpentry. The son doesn't know those kinds of things instinctively or intuitively.

He has to be shown, and he watches his father. And it says in verse 20, The father loves the son and shows him all things that he himself does. Jesus must have been reflecting back on his own experience in the carpenter shop, learning to be a carpenter.

Joseph showing him how it's done, showing him the techniques, how to hold the tools, how to put things together, how to make best use of the resources and the time they

have to get the product done. The child doesn't know that intuitively. The child has to be taught that.

And he does learn it by mimicking the father. As he says there in verse 19, Whatever the father does, the son also does in what manner. Now, Jesus' point here is, of course, that the reason he works on the Sabbath is because his father works on the Sabbath, and he doesn't know how to work except the way his father does.

He just does whatever his father does. Sons do that, you know. They do their father's business the same way their fathers did it.

At least that was true in those days, since we have a lot more freedom of vocation and career in our own society than they did back then. But generally speaking, the father's trade was passed along from father to son to grandson and so forth, and so that certain trades were in the family for generations. And what Jesus said was generally true.

Now, our mimicry of God is to be like that, just like Jesus mimicked God. Jesus did whatever his father did, he did it the same way. We should do the same.

Now, already at the end of Ephesians 4, we have an example of how we are to mimic God, because he says in Ephesians 4.32, forgiving one another just as God in Christ also forgave you. So there's a way that we're to imitate God. That is, we have known God as one who forgives, and we should imitate him in that and forgive one another.

Jesus, of course, said in the Sermon on the Mount, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. And the reason that peacemakers would be acknowledged to be the sons of God is because they're doing what God does. By being a peacemaker, one is imitating God.

God makes peace. He has reconciled the world to himself in Christ. That's a peacemaking activity.

He also has broken down the middle wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile, and Christ made in himself one new man, so making peace. Paul has said that to us in Ephesians 2.15. So that our activity in making peace with others is like God, and therefore those who are peacemakers will be recognized as having the family characteristic. They will be known as the sons of God.

Likewise, in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, Jesus said in verse 44, But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, and do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven. Now, it does not mean that you become a child of God by doing these kind things. It means that you might exhibit yourself to be, in fact, a son of your Father, because he is this way, and Jesus gives that example in verse 45, For he makes his son to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his hand to judge the

unjust.

So that he is saying that God is not only kind to his friends, he is also kind to those who are not his friends, and you should be like that, so that you will be sons of your heavenly Father. So the idea that children mimic their parents provides a basis for urging us to mimic God, who is our parent. One of the things that I found very early on, when I became an adult, was that I didn't know very much about fathering.

I had a child when I was 20 years old to raise, and I was a single dad from the time I was 21, for many years after that. And although my parents were good folks, and I certainly don't have any criticism of them, they raised three godly offspring themselves, who are all serving the Lord today. I can't really argue that they didn't do something right.

Yet there were things that I did not feel to imitate. I felt, you know, anyone can see whether their parents did things differently than they feel they should, and yet I didn't have any model, except God himself, to know how to discipline a child differently than my own parents had done. And I'm not saying they did a bad job, I just don't think they did as good a job as they might have if they had known more.

And I haven't done as good a job as I might have done, had I known more. But I will say that whenever I was wondering what a father is supposed to do, it was not so often the case that I reflected back on my earthly father and thought, well, how did he do it? Although I'm sure that his dad didn't make a deal. But I always would think consciously, well, how does God treat me? Is that how I should treat children? How does he discipline me? How does he forbear with me? How does he train me? And so from the time I was about 20 years old, when my child was born, I began to consciously think all the time about, well, how does God do this? And I have not done perfectly myself, because even if I know everything God does, I'm not always consistent in doing it.

But I will say that being an imitator of God is a very important thing for especially young fathers, because there are few young fathers today who have had model fathers themselves that God is. But of course, Paul is not speaking of imitating God particularly in that one role. But that's just one area where God's example provides a role model for our behavior, and there are many, many others.

As we read the scriptures, we read of God's dealings with Israel and with people in general, and we get an idea of what kind of a person God is. And that's one of the very important things that makes it so important that we read the scriptures so that we might acquaint ourselves with God. We can't see God with our eyes, as a son generally can see his father, but we view God through the spirit as we learn of him, and as we think on him and meditate on him and trust in him, and we begin to know him, and then what we know of him is what we're supposed to follow.

You know, people do, I think, very naturally and very perhaps irresistibly, they are drawn

to become like their God. And you can often tell what kind of a God religious people perceive God to be by the way they are. If people are very legalistic in their religion, it's likely that they think of God as a very legalistic God.

If people are very tolerant and don't make a big deal of sin, then they probably picture God as being a person who doesn't make a big deal about sin. I don't believe that either of those extremes are an accurate picture of God in the Bible. God is not tolerant of sin, but he is gracious, he's not a legalist either.

But a false perception of God will generally speaking lead to a false life, a false Christian life, a false, not so much in the sense of duplicity or hypocrisy, but just in the sense that it may be a sincere replica of a flawed model. Since God is not seen with our eye, he is perceived largely with our mind and our spirit. And misperception of what kind of a God we serve will lead to misbehavior in all likelihood, because people do become like the object of their worship.

And so it's important that we get to know God so that we can imitate him properly as opposed to inaccurately. That knowledge of God comes nowhere as accurately as in the study of his deeds and of his nature as he has revealed himself in the scripture. Now, we are not only told to be followers or imitators of God, we're also told to walk in as Christ.

So we're told to take Christ as well. God the Father and Christ being spoken of separately and commonly so in scripture. But of course Jesus is God too, but speaking of Christ, it's speaking of Jesus in his earthly career as the anointed one, as the Messiah, as he lived his life out before his followers.

And we are to walk in love as Christ also has loved us, and given himself for us, so that love means giving of yourself for others. Paul's going to say that very specifically about husbands and wives in a moment, because he says in verse 25 of the same chapter, husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. Same thought.

The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and Christ gave himself for it. That is true for husbands to model after, it's also true for all of us, according to verse 2, that we should walk in love as Christ also loved us and has given himself for us. Christ giving himself for us is said here to be an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma.

This is language taken from Leviticus, really, and from other Old Testament passages, where sacrifices were often said to be a pleasing scent or a pleasing aroma to God. And any sacrifice that is offered sincerely and according to God's instructions is going to be a pleasant thing to him, well-pleasing him. And yet there are sacrifices that are offered to God that are not pleasing to him.

The scripture says in Proverbs, the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to God. And so not all religious activity is pleasing to God. If the person is wicked or is unworthy to come to God because of unrepentance or whatever, then God is not pleased with him.

Jesus, of course, in offering himself up, was no sinner and was not wicked and therefore his sacrifice of himself was the offering of a pure lamp as without blemish and without spot. There are many other scriptures we could turn to that speak of how a sacrifice to God is a pleasing thing and acceptable to him, if it's properly offered. I would just say that as it says here that Jesus offered himself up as an offering to God or a sacrifice to God.

We're told in Romans 12, 1, that we are also to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service. So we are to imitate Christ in his giving of himself both to us and to God. We love one another in the same way that Christ loved us and gave himself for us.

And so our love must be for other people, just like Christ's giving of himself was for other people, us. But additionally, our love, the love of Christ, as we are to imitate it, is toward God. He gave himself for us but at the same time offered himself to God for a sweet smelling rum, something pleasing to God.

So our love, if it is the true imitation of Christ, will be a laying down of ourselves for each other and for God. Laying down our lives for the brethren, as John says in 1 John. That's what love is.

It is modeled by Christ. There's of course many places in 1 John and other parts of scripture that present the love of Jesus as the model for ours, but in particular in 1 John 3, there's a very close parallel in thought to what Paul has said here. Although this is a different author, he's got the very same idea.

In 1 John 3.16, by this we know love, because he laid down his life for us and we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Now, laying down your life for the brethren, that's an imitation of Christ's love. Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself.

But how do you give yourself for someone else? I mean, Jesus gave himself by dying in our place. Perhaps there are people that you'd be willing to die for, I hope. There should be.

In fact, I believe biblically you should be willing to die for anyone, because you should be eager to see the Lord and eager to lay down your life for even your enemies, if you're to be like Christ. That's why it's so difficult to picture a Christian's involvement in war, when to be like Christ we would lay down our lives for our enemies, rather than lay down our enemies' lives for us. And the whole spirit of war is so contrary to the spirit of Christ, it seems to me.

But that's a side issue. The point is that we need to lay down our lives for our brethren and for whoever. But what does it mean to lay down your life? Does it always mean that you become a martyr and you die? Not necessarily.

John himself gives an example of what it means in 1 John 3, the very next verse. But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? So you can lay down your life in practical ways of giving assistance, giving up your freedom or your resources, your time for other people. Laying down your prerogatives in deference to the prerogatives of someone else or the preferences of someone else.

This is, in a sense, laying down your life. The ultimate in laying down your life, which we must be prepared to do, is even dying. But if we don't have the privilege of doing that, and not all of us will, we yet on many occasions every day have the opportunity to live on our lives in these other ways for other people.

But Ephesians 5 verse says, fornication and all or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints. This business that it should not even be named is reminiscent of passages in the Old Testament that say don't even let the names of the gods of the heathen be heard among you. Don't let their names be on your lips at all.

It's as if you shouldn't even acknowledge them as having enough validity even to talk about them. Now, I think that is a bit of a hyperbole, because even the prophets mentioned the gods of the heathen by name, and even Moses did, who gave the instructions not to let the names of the gods be on your mouth. Essentially it's saying don't give any credence and don't give any attention to the gods of the heathen.

It doesn't mean that to mention their names in certain contexts would not be legitimate, as they are mentioned, even by biblical writers, in certain contexts that are legitimate uses. Likewise, when it says don't let these things be named among you, I'm not sure exactly how this means. I mean, obviously it means these things should not be practiced among you, but that would not explain why he said don't let them be named.

I think what he is saying is that we shouldn't be having these things as the topics of our conversation or our attention. There may be times where we have to reprove them, as he's going to say a little later here in verse 11, but in general these are not to be the topic of our attention or of our conversation. And he goes on to say neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor jesting, which are not fitting but rather giving of thanks.

Now the New King James says nor coarse jesting, but actually the word coarse, you may notice, is in italics, or it should be, if it's not. Maybe it's not in italics, but it needs to be, because the word coarse isn't in the Greek there. It is simply nor jesting.

This is a verse that has given many Christians that I've known the impression that all

humor is inappropriate, because it's not fitting here. Foolish talking and jesting are not fitting. And probably to dispel this impression, the impression that all humor is unfitting because jesting might be considered to be telling jokes and things like that, the translators have stuck in the word coarse as a modifier, so that not all jesting would be forbidden, by the way it reads here, but only coarse jesting.

Now of course since that is not kind of the Greek, it's hard to know. It's something we need to take a look at. To what degree is humor forbidden in scripture? It has been observed that though the Bible on more than one occasion refers to Jesus crying, it never describes him laughing.

In fact, it never even describes him as smiling. And yet that I think it would be inappropriate to judge from that bit of data that Jesus never did laugh, or certainly that he never smiled. That Jesus must have been in some respects winsome is seen in the fact that multitudes followed him, including people who weren't particularly committed to spiritual things.

They were following him and many were very devoted to him and very emotionally attached to him. He was even invited by sinners to come to their feasts in their home. If he was a humorless, morose, somber individual who never had any warmth or humor about him and couldn't appreciate the humor in a pure situation, then it doesn't seem like he would have had quite the popularity in the crowds of sinners that he had.

Now, we can't deduce much from that either. All I'm saying is there is more than one strain of evidence as to what degree Jesus might have been one open to humor. It seems to me that humor is a gift of God and must therefore in some sense reflect God's own nature.

We do not find in the animal world or the plant world the ability to appreciate a joke or humor, the humor or the irony of a situation. I mean, what is humor after all? What makes something funny? I'm sure you've thought about that before. Almost everyone certainly has thought about that.

Why was that funny? Why is that statement funny? What is it about those words that make people laugh when they hear those words? Is it the, I mean, a comedian? There are certain people whose personalities just keep me laughing, even though they're not making jokes particularly. They're just humorous people. They're just people whose personalities tickle me.

My father-in-law is one of those people. There have been certain preachers I've heard that are that way. My mother's father was that way too.

Just something delightful and humorous about his whole personality. And just in conversation, I'm always breaking into laughter in admiration, really, and enjoyment of

his personality. I have to say that what I'm laughing at is usually something funny.

He says something that has sort of a funny twist to it or something. Nothing that I could describe, as Paul describes, as not fitting. There obviously is much humor that is not fitting for the Christian.

But if the Christian cannot see humor, or is to die to all appreciation of humor, I suspect that that person is dying to an aspect of the image of God that only humans possess. Hyenas may laugh, but they don't see any humor in the situation. And humor is something that is more subtle than the animal brain could appreciate.

But humans all have it. Some suppress it more than others, but all humans have an appreciation for something funny. All can be made to laugh.

Even God laughs in the Bible. We don't read of Jesus laughing in the New Testament. We read in the Old Testament of God laughing, usually in mockery or in derision.

But see, even that is humorous if it makes a certain impression. In my observation, people, at least worldly people, but even Christians to a degree, tend to laugh partly out of surprise. The punchline of the joke is always funnier if it's unanticipated.

If you know what the punchline is when the joke is half told, you're not likely to laugh much when the punchline comes. It's the surprise twist. It's the unexpected thing.

It's the incongruous. It's the thing that just seems so... just the thing that no ordinary person would think of, that when you hear it, it strikes you funny. There is something of the incongruous or the unexpected or the unthinkable in many jokes or in many things that... humorous movies or whatever, that are funny, that strike people funny.

And so I think to a certain extent, the unexpected is an element in humor. And another thing that I have observed in humorous statements is sometimes the thing is so true that you laugh to hear it because people would not normally say it, but it is so true that it strikes you funny to hear it. Now, there's... you know, if I said, you know, folks, we're not going to have class anymore this year.

I'm going to call this the last class. You'll be unexpected. Don't laugh.

It's not funny. Not every unexpected thing is funny. Likewise, if I said two plus two equals four, that is entirely true, but it's not very funny.

And so there's an element of humor that is more subtle. It's not just that there's an element of surprise or where something is stated to which is so classically true, that's so stereotypically obvious, that it's in itself humorous. So there's a missing element that I think is simply part of human personality and something that is part of not the fallen human condition, but just part of the human condition, part of what God made us to

appreciate the humorous situation.

It makes us laugh to watch a little child, a little baby, you know, taking its first steps or, you know, or handling something, trying to figure it out. It's something so commonplace, but it makes us laugh. There's something cute about that.

God filled the earth with cute things and unexpected things and true things. And it's many of those things that in the right setting and context are, you know, they elicit humorous response. And I don't see anything wrong about that.

I don't see how there could be anything wrong about that. And I can hardly imagine that Jesus failed to see the humor in certain situations. Now there are forms of humor that are not very polite or not very moral.

There is a kind of humor that is funny because it's embarrassing, because it's naughty. And we see this, of course, very often among the, in the humor of the wicked people of the world, dirty jokes and so forth. I do not have a television and I do not watch sitcoms, but on occasions I have been in somebody else's home and had the unhappiness of watching a modern sitcom.

And, you know, there's a lot of laughter canned on these sitcoms. I don't know if people would laugh if they didn't play the recorded laughter or not, but presumably the recorded laughter helps the audience laugh too, or at least tells them when they're supposed to see humor in a situation so that they'll, you know, like Pavlov's dog, you know, the bell rings and you laugh, or the bell rings and the dog salivates. The canned laughter plays and you laugh too, because that's, that's your cue.

That's, something funny just happened in case you didn't notice it. But what I noticed on the few occasions I've seen sitcoms in recent times is there's almost a total absence of anything that could be called humor. There's just almost a total dependency on naughtiness and immorality, crudeness.

And when the laughter comes on, it's when somebody has said something crude or suggestive in a sexual and immoral way. It's not that they're really funny, then said, it's just naughty, and I think it embarrasses the audience. You know, people giggle when they're embarrassed.

And there is that species of humor that is in no sense legitimate. It is corrupt. It's part of the corrupt fallen nature.

There is very much in humor in the world that is at the expense of another party. You know, how many Polacks does it take to screw in a light bulb, Chris? You know, I mean, a whole class of jokes about blondes or about Polacks or about whoever, you know, rabbis or Catholics or something, you know, I mean, that kind of humor to my mind is inappropriate because it finds humor in putting somebody else down, which a lot of

people like to do. But it's not a Christian thing to do.

And of course, it's easy to imagine that there are forms of humor, perhaps the majority of the forms of humor that the world observes, that are not fitting for Christians because they are either based on immorality and corruption, or they're based on putting somebody else down. And that is common in the world. Unfortunately, the latter type is fairly common even among Christians.

Most Christians I know won't tell a dirty joke, at least not in the presence of another Christian. I don't know how many would in the presence of a non-Christian, because every time I'm around them, they're in the presence of a Christian. And so I can't hear them when they're not in the presence of a Christian.

But I will not be able to vouch for the assertion that Christians don't tell dirty jokes when they're not around other Christians. But I will say that even around other Christians, Christians often tell jokes at the expense of other people, even if they're not formal jokes, just, you know, cutting remarks and so forth. Now, there are times when the incongruous even is found in the teaching of Jesus, which seems to me, although I don't believe he was trying to be funny, I believe there's something humorous, and it wouldn't be inappropriate if people chuckled when they got the mental picture of a person with a beam in his eye, or of a camel going through the eye of a needle, or of a person swallowing a camel when he strains out a gnat.

Those images are so incongruous, so zany, that a person, if they really pictured that and heard that for the first time, and none of us are hearing that for the first time today, so they're just ho-hum old images, but the first time a child reads about someone swallowing a camel whole, a child's going to get that picture in their mind, they're going to think that's funny, and it is. Although Jesus didn't say those things in a context where he was hoping to get a laugh out of people, not at all. All those things are images that he brought up in extremely serious teaching, but I wouldn't be surprised if people chuckled.

I never crack jokes when I'm teaching, but people sometimes chuckle at things, and I don't see anything wrong with that. If they find something humorous, I don't know, sometimes I don't anticipate what they're going to find humorous, but I assume that everyone has a different kind of sense of humor, and it is not the case that Paul would be saying, okay everyone, check your sense of humor at the cross, and don't ever find anything funny again, because I just can't believe that that's, that would be his way. For one thing, one form of humor that is very common is sarcasm, and yet Paul used sarcasm a great deal, so did Jesus.

Now that might be his type of, some people might say, well Christians, that's one type of humor Christians shouldn't have, is sarcasm, but that's actually one of the few forms of humor we actually find deliberately used by Jesus and Paul frequently. When Jesus said it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside Jerusalem, that was a sarcastic remark,

and Paul made many sarcastic remarks when he was talking to the Galatians or in 2nd Corinthians about false teachers and so forth. He had stinging remarks, some of which were sarcastic.

Now they weren't in themselves uproariously funny, but we know that sarcasm is, has an element of humor in it too. So what I'm saying is, when Paul says put away foolish talking and jesting, which is not fitting, it should not be thought that jesting is somehow a word that takes in all forms of humorous discourse. Humor is legitimate in some cases, just like seriousness is legitimate in some cases, if it is consistent with Christian love and Christian purity.

In fact, foolish talking, though the term foolish there might even modify the word jesting, foolish talking and foolish jesting. The jesting and the talking might both somehow fall under the general idea of foolish. There are some people who never get serious, they're always goofing off, and they're always trying to make a funny remark.

I mean, humor is, I think, inappropriate, not only when it's at the expense of another person, not only when it's unclean or impure, but also when it's simply a form of attention getting. And some people have learned from early age that they can get attention and get strokes and be affirmed and so forth if they are always saying something funny, and sometimes they're pretty good at it, sometimes they're pretty pitiful at it, but they're always trying. That's not fitting, it's not appropriate.

Playing the fool and being the jester is not your role model for the Christian life. I think the Christian life should be seasoned with a bit of humor, just the humor in real situations, and in clever remarks that are not in any way biting or cutting or harmful to people. But someone who makes it his goal to be funny is not going to be walking in love, for one thing, because there's too few times that you can be genuinely funny without picking on someone else or saying something unkind about someone else.

And they're not going to be very much like Jesus, because you can be sure Jesus didn't follow the modern after-dinner speakers rule of warming up the audience with a few jokes before giving your presentation. I actually sat grieving under a pastor for some years. If you ask why did I stay, I was actually, for a little while, I was in a church as the interim pastor myself, in Benden, I was attending this church because I liked the former pastor, and he left, he retired, and the church asked if I'd preach until they found another pastor.

So for three months I preached in the pulpit, and so I became quite endeared to the church there, and they to me, and so when a new pastor came, I was quite attached to many of the people, I just stayed there in the church. The new pastor I didn't enjoy very much at all, and he seemed to think that the best way to preach a sermon is to tell two or three jokes at the beginning of the message, warm the audience up. I have heard many preachers on the radio and otherwise who do this kind of thing, although some do

it a lot better than he did.

At least some preachers can think of jokes that have something to do with what they want to talk about. Now this fellow just seemed to take jokes at random out of a joke book, and they didn't have anything to do with his message, it was just to get the people laughing at the beginning, and then maybe they'll fall asleep when you start giving a serious sermon, but at least you won't feel too bad in your ego because you've gotten a few laughs out of them, and that's always affirming to a speaker. I don't know, I'm not sure what the reason for his jokes were, but it was certainly inappropriate, it seemed to me, even though there was nothing nasty or crude about the jokes, they just weren't relevant, they were not fitting, they didn't fit the situation.

And I think that probably what we need to learn from verse four here is that our speech should be fitting to the situation. There are times when the mood is such, and the situation is such, that a humorous remark is appropriate. There's times when it's very inappropriate, and some people don't seem to have any discernment between the two.

They either refuse to enjoy humor when it's appropriate, or they simply never get serious when it's necessary to be so. And so the fitting part is the key functional element of this sentence. What is fitting for saints? Certain kinds of speech are not fitting, but in the end of verse four he says, but rather, instead of the wrong kind of speech, giving of thanks.

Now giving of thanks is a Greek word, eucharista, which the Catholic people were eucharist from, means giving of thanks, but the central core of that word is charis, which is grace. And Calvin and some other commentators felt that this word in this case should not be rendered giving of thanks, but rather should be words of grace, or gracious words, or something like that. Because Paul had already said in chapter four, and verse 28, or 29, excuse me, that you should speak only what is good for the necessary edification that it may impart grace to the hearers.

And so since grace, or charis, is the root of the word eucharista, which is translated here giving of thanks, Calvin thought maybe, and with other commentators following him, that here the word should not be translated giving of thanks, but rather something like speaking words of grace, words that minister grace, as opposed to the kind of foolish talking and stuff like that. Anyway, it is usually, in fact, the noun is usually translated giving of thanks, or thanksgiving. And so we'll just stay with the translation as is.

Giving of thanks is always fitting. If you never know what to say, you can always give thanks to God for something. A lot of times when people pray, they pray for a few minutes and they can't think of anything else to pray for.

And that's why their prayers tend to be short. Not because they're short, compact, and effective, but because they just can't think of anything else to say. Their mind wanders or whatever.

If you ever can't think of anything to say, you can always say thanks. There's always something that we should be thankful for. In fact, there are many things that we have never thanked God for, and of the things that we have, we thank him repeatedly.

Every day. Every day, our health, our vision, our, you know, friends, our salvation. I mean, if we thank him only for our salvation, that should keep us busy the rest of our lives.

So many benefits. And it says in Psalm 103, bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits. Later in this chapter, we're going to be exhorted in verse 20 to give thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's part of a longer sentence that tells us how to walk in such a way as to stay filled with the Spirit. Giving him thanks cultivates a Spirit-filled life. And it is always fitting to thank God.

Verse 5 says, For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Now, this is a shorter form of what Paul says in at least two other places. One of those places is Galatians, chapter 5, where he lists things that he calls the works of the flesh.

And he says after he has listed them, and there's a long list beginning at Galatians 5.19, which includes the same things as in Ephesians, namely fornication and uncleanness. And let me see if covetousness is on there. Idolatry is there, and of course Paul says that covetousness is idolatry.

But in Galatians 5.19 through 21, we have this long list of things called the works of the flesh. And at the end of the list he says, Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. So there are certain behaviors that guarantee you will not inherit the kingdom of God.

I remember once hearing Keith Green say in a Bible study in his home that he says, people say you can't work your way to heaven. And it's true. You can't work your way to heaven, but you can sure work your way to hell.

You can't get to heaven by your works, but you can guarantee you go to hell by your works. Because there are certain behaviors, which the Bible says if you do them, you will not inherit the kingdom of God, and there's just nowhere else to go. Then hell, if you're not going to inherit the kingdom of God.

And Paul wants to get this across apparently to a lot of, to a broad audience, because he said the same things to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians chapter 6 we have a similar list of sins. In 1 Corinthians 6 verse 9 and all the way through, well just through 10, a fairly long list, the same kind of list.

You've got fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners. But the thing about this list is that it also ends the same way as that in Galatians and that in Ephesians. Namely, those that do these things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now, whatever anyone else may say to the contrary, if you meet somebody who is an unrepentant fornicator, or idolater, or adulterer, or homosexual, or thief, or covetous, seems strange to throw that in there with it, covetous. Where's an American who isn't covetous? I'd better look for some, better be one. Or a drunkard, you know, someone who is unrepentant in these behaviors is not going to inherit the kingdom of God.

Many are saying, well I'm saved by grace and I can do these things, I'm not saved by my works. You may not be saved by your works, but you can be damned by your works. That's what damns people in the first place, is their works.

And these are the kinds that do it. In fact, it says in Ephesians 5, 6, Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. People are damned because they do these things.

Don't let anyone deceive you about this with their empty promises. And I dare say that those empty promises are heard in the pulpits of many churches throughout the land. Namely, that you cannot lose your salvation.

God doesn't really expect you to live a holy life. You're saved by grace, and that means that it doesn't matter whether you live a holy life or not. Of course, most pulpits would say you should.

It's obviously the right response to being saved. People ought to be better than they are, but don't think that it has anything to do with your salvation. Paul certainly thought it did.

He said it's because of these deeds that the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience. It's the second time he used that expression, children of disobedience. It came up first in chapter 2, where he said that Satan is that spirit that is at work among the sons of disobedience.

That's in Ephesians 2.2. Now he calls them that again. When we came to that expression there, I mentioned that sons of disobedience is a Hebraism, sort of like the sons of Belial, or the sons of Belial. It just means disobedient people.

People who are disobedient are the sons of disobedience, the sons of God. And Paul acknowledges that some may say the contrary on this. But don't let them deceive you.

Their words are empty. Paul was apparently aware of words that were being spoken contrary to this doctrine. Words that some fornicators, though unrepentant, may go into

the kingdom of God.

Some unclean people, though unrepentant, may indeed go into the kingdom of God. Some covetous people, idolaters though they are, will perhaps still go into the kingdom of God, unrepentant. Not so.

Those words, anyone who makes those kinds of statements, has got empty words, and they are deceiving you. And don't let them do it. Because for you to get into the kingdom of God is more important than for you to have these people thinking you're right on.

If they think you're a little too holiness oriented, a little too legalistic because you insist on living a holy life, well, it's better to go to heaven with Jesus than to go elsewhere with those who will criticize that doctrine. They are among the sons of disobedience. I would point out, and this is just a side issue, but I need to point out before we get too far beyond it, in verse 5, just a little issue, and that is that the kingdom of God, as Paul almost uses the expression, is amplified in verse 5 here to be the kingdom of Christ and God.

Now, I only point that out because there's some people out there that want to make some kind of a different kingdom every time there's a different expression for it. The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, now we've got the kingdom of Christ. Remember Paul said in Colossians 1.13 that God has translated us out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his own dear son.

That would be the kingdom of Christ. But that's not different than the kingdom of God. There's one kingdom that Paul calls the kingdom of Christ and of God.

That is, it is the kingdom of Christ and it's the kingdom of God. Same kingdom. More than one label can be attached to it depending on the context, but that's not too important to this particular side issue, but it's for those wondering how many kingdoms there may be in view of the fact there's quite a few different names for the kingdom.

There's only one kingdom. It is the kingdom of Christ and it is the kingdom of God. Now, because the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience through these behaviors, he concludes this paragraph in verse 7 by saying, therefore do not be partakers with them.

Partakers with them can mean partakers in their sins. Don't participate with them in their behaviors. That would be pretty much what he says also down in verse 11, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Don't be in partnership with these sinful behaviors. Now, the idea of being a partaker with other people in their sins is found elsewhere in scripture. You have, for example, Paul's exhortation to Timothy about not laying hands hastily on someone because you may thus be a partaker of other men's sins.

It's in 1 Timothy 5 22. If you lay hands on somebody and discharge them, I should say not discharge them, but launch them into ministry with your endorsement, then their sins, if they commit them, their abuse of the office falls on your head to some extent and you are partaker of their sins. Also in Revelation chapter 18, there is the call for the righteous to come out of Babylon before it falls.

And in Revelation 18 verse 4 it says, I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins. So separation from the sinful behaviors of the world is called upon else you will share in or participate in or partake in their sins. So when Paul in Ephesians 5 says, therefore, do not be partakers with them.

It might mean don't eat with them at their idolatrous feasts. Don't participate with them in their sinful dissipations. On the other hand, though, that verse in Revelation also says, where it says, come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, it says, lest you receive of her plagues.

In addition to partaking of their sins, you may also partake of their punishments. You may also share in their plagues. And that may be what Paul has in mind when he says in Ephesians 5, 7, do not be partakers with them, because the last thing he has said about them is that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience.

Therefore, don't partake of it with them. Don't you also experience the wrath of God by having taken their course. Whatever he means, for instance, don't be partakers with them.

He might mean in their sins and in their punishment. Both concepts have separate attestation elsewhere in scripture. Now the second paragraph also is about walking.

Whereas the first paragraph talked about walking in love, this one talks about walking in the light or walking as children of light. In verse 8, it says, for you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light for the fruit of the spirit.

And by the way, the word the spirit there in some of the more ancient manuscripts doesn't say the spirit, but says of the light, the fruit of the light is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, proving what is acceptable to the Lord and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

Therefore, he says, awake you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. Well, obviously light is the dominant theme of these verses 8 through 14, from the beginning of the paragraph to the end. It's all about light.

Now one thing that's surprising initially is he says, you were once darkness, but now you are light. I think we would find it more natural if he said, you were once in darkness, but

now you are in the light. This expression is known elsewhere in scripture.

In fact, in 1 John, we have that contrast made to be walking in the light and walking in darkness and being in the light and being in darkness. In 1 John chapter 1, verse 6 and 7, it says, in this you greatly rejoice. It says, if we say that we have fellowship with him and walk, I better read 5 too, so many verses on this paragraph.

This is the message which we have heard from him and declare to you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.

And the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin. So if we walk in darkness or if we walk in the light, this is the contrast. Likewise, in 1 John chapter 2, 1 John 2, 8 and following, it says, again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness until now. Now, you are in the light or you are in darkness. And yet Paul says, you were once, not in darkness, but you were once darkness.

And he doesn't say you are now in the light, he says you are now light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. Of course, Paul is not disagreeing with the notion that darkness is a realm in which we once walked and light is a realm in which we now walk.

God is light and we are in God, so we are in the light. Those who are not in God are in darkness. But he is emphasizing a different point, and that is that we are not only living our lives in the realm of light, but we have become light ourselves.

Jesus said to the disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, you are the light of the world. And therefore, not only are we enlightened in the sense of we know what we didn't know, we see what we couldn't previously see. We're no longer stumbling around in the dark, but we now have a clear view of the path.

We're not only in the light, but we have become luminous ourselves. We have become light. Once we were darkness, that is to say, just as now as light is the world, we increase the sum total of light in the world.

When we are in darkness, we our own selves increase the sum total of darkness. We emanated darkness. We contributed to darkness.

We were ourselves part of that darkness. But now we are part of the light that has come. The darkness has passed, and the true light is now shining, John said.

And that light is shining. It has shined to us. And what he's suggesting here is it also shines through us, that once we are illuminated, we illuminate others.

And really, there's a parenthesis there in verse 9, it says, Now, frankly, I'm going to have to probably, in my own opinion, side with the other reading, the fruit of the light, here. Even though, of course, Paul elsewhere in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22 does use the expression, fruit of the spirit. We are acquainted with that.

Yet the older manuscripts say fruit of light, which doesn't mean it's better, because the older manuscripts I disagree with sometimes against the newer ones. But I think just because of the context. He's talking about light from beginning to end in this whole paragraph.

And what he's saying is we need to walk as children of light. And he explains as an aside what light produces. The fruit of light is when you have received light like a planted seed, the fruit that grows out of it is goodness and righteousness and truth.

So this is how you walk as a child of light. You produce the fruit of light, which is goodness, righteousness and truth. Now, why does light produce that? Goodness, righteousness and truth.

Well, Jesus explains that, I believe, in John chapter 3, in his conversation with Nicodemus. John chapter 3 and verse 18, actually verse 19, it says this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world. And men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen that they have been done in God. Now, there are two realms in which a person can live in darkness or in light.

In darkness, you can get away with being wicked. And, you know, you can, living in the dark has an awful lot to do with concealment, because in the light it's exposed, things are exposed in the light, things are concealed in the dark. People who walk in darkness conceal a great deal of their life.

They don't live a righteous life, but they conceal their unrighteousness in measure. There are some sinners who seem to be shameless about their sin, but even they have things they're not telling other people about themselves. Some people appear to be about as bad as a person can be, but believe it or not, they're worse than they appear.

Because they're in the darkness, they are concealing even some things worse that they're not willing to show. People who come to the light are people who have nothing to hide, people who do not mind the exposure, because what will be illuminated by the light in them is nothing to be ashamed of. Their deeds are according to truth.

And when people walk in light, it prevents them from getting involved in shameful activities, and it results in their living in goodness, and in truth, and in righteousness, which Paul says is here's the fruit of the light, or the fruit of the Spirit, but I think it's the fruit of light here. Light produces this fruit, this result, that because you live in the light, light is exposure. That's how Jesus used it.

It exposes things. Paul uses it here also, as we shall see, in fact, in almost the very next verse. But in verse 10, he says, Proving what is acceptable to the Lord, that is, your life, walking as a child of light, in goodness and righteousness and truth, will prove to others what is acceptable to the Lord.

A similar phrase is found also in Romans 12, where it says we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we might prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. That's Romans 12 too. A Christian life proves to the world what's right, if it's lived properly.

We can tell people that certain things are right, but if it's never modeled, it makes no impact. They don't believe it's possible or true. But if you live your life and they can see the change that God has made, it proves what God wants.

It proves what God approves of and finds acceptable. By the way, speaking of us as children of light, the phrase is not too very different than two verses earlier, speaking of the sons or children of disobedience. And as I said, that the sons of disobedience, just as a Hebraism that means disobedient ones, sons of light presumably just means light ones, ones who are light.

And you are light if you're a Christian. Now he says, therefore, in verse 11, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Now there is no fellowship between light and darkness.

If the light tries to mingle with darkness, it results in a corruption of the light. Light in itself is pure. If you want to add a little darkness to it, it diminishes the light.

It corrupts the light. In 2 Corinthians, in a well-known passage in chapter 6 and verse 14, 2 Corinthians 6, 14, Paul says, Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? What communion or fellowship has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial or Belial? Or what part has the believer with an unbeliever? Of course, these rhetorical questions all imply one answer, none.

Light and darkness do not have any fellowship. We read a moment ago in 1 John, chapter 1, in verse 5, this is the message that we've heard of him, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. You can't have the two mixed together.

Oneness. Fellowship means oneness. There is no oneness between light and darkness.

They're opposites. This, of course, is biblical proof that the New Age concept of the ultimate reality is wrong because they accept the Hindu concept of a force that has both a light side and a dark side. Of course, popularized through the Star Wars movies, but long ago and forever has been part of Hinduism and is part of the New Age thinking, that the ultimate reality is not a personal God who is all good.

It is an impersonal force that is partly light and partly dark. These two are in tension. That's what the yin and yang symbol, which we see all over the place on bumper stickers and t-shirts and so forth, is about.

It shows the tension between the light side and the dark side of the force. But God is very much unlike that concept. There's no darkness at all in him, just light.

Therefore, if we're going to be children of light, if we're going to walk in the light, we're going to have to not mingle with the unfruitful works of darkness. Now, notice it doesn't say, do not mingle with the sons of darkness. There are times when we are forced to mingle with them, if for no other reason than outreach.

And even apart from that, just working in the world makes it absolutely impossible to avoid contact with children of darkness, and God apparently doesn't want us to avoid such contact. Jesus prayed for us in John 17, 15, Father, I pray that you would not take them out of the world, but that you would keep them from the wicked one. It's about attention for the church to not be in the world.

The world needs us. There's a mission that we have to the world. Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 5, 9 and following, 1 Corinthians 5, 9 and following, I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

Yet I did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world or with the covetous or extortioners or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother who is a fornicator or covetous or idolater or revolter or drunkard or extortioner. Now, you say, I don't expect you to have no contact with the people of the world.

Jesus prayed that we would not be taken out of the world and we shouldn't try to take ourselves out of the world. We shouldn't go off into cloistered monasteries where we remain pure, we hope, by absolutely no contact with the world. The dynamic of the Christian life is that Jesus, the clean, in contact with a leper or a woman with an issue of blood, traditionally unclean in the Old Testament, makes them clean by the contact, not him unclean by the contact.

In the Old Testament, you touch an unclean person and you become unclean. In the New Testament, there is a new wine, there is a new life, a new dynamic of victory in Christ that when this life comes into contact with the unclean, it more often will bring the

unclean into the state of cleanness, just as Jesus did by his touch of those who were ceremonially unclean. Likewise, light, when it comes into a dark room, does not become dark.

It eliminates the darkness. The darkness cannot overcome it. When light and darkness are confronted with one another, the light wins and the darkness receives.

The night and the dawn is a good image of that, that the Bible frequently uses metaphorically, that the dawning of the day drives away the darkness. The darkness cannot stop it. In fact, John's Gospel says in John 1.5, the light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

So, just as the power of the Spirit of Jesus overcomes uncleanness by the contact, if we are walking in that power rather than walking in compromise, so also if we walk in the light, our contact with the world will bring light to the world, because the darkness cannot overcome it. The problem is when we are not walking in the light, when we are not walking as sons of light. It is not a given that just because we are Christians, all contact we have with the world is going to be redemptive.

There are many Christians who are corrupted by their contact with the world, but only because they are not walking as children of light. Now, we are not forbidden to have contact with the children of darkness, but we are told to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. That means we should not have any participation in the lifestyle of those who live in the realm of darkness.

If we do, we shall find that we don't bring them light, but they simply bring us darkness. But rather than fellowshiping with such, we are to expose them, verse 11 says. Light exposes things, and Paul goes off on that in verse 13.

But in verse 12 he says, For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. It is a little bit like the statement in verse 3, Let not these things, fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness, even be named or spoken of among you. Although Paul says that, you see, obviously it is not as if there is no appropriate time to name such things or appropriate to speak of such things, but to discuss them in a shameless fashion as the world does is a reproach.

To speak of those things, you should feel somewhat unclean, not that you really are unclean, but you should feel somewhat like you have been, you know, maybe you are wearing a wetsuit, but you are immersed in sewage, you know, I mean the sewage doesn't exactly penetrate the wetsuit, but you still don't feel very good for having been in that environment. And, you know, when people are talking about corruption and wicked things, you shouldn't feel like you are in a comfortable environment. It should somewhat go against your grain.

It should be shameful. You should be, in a sense, shocked that these people can shamelessly talk about such things which in the sight of God are shameful. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, verse 13 says.

And the last line says, For whatever makes manifest is light. Now, in other words, whatever exposes can be interpreted as light, but that last line is thought by many scholars to have a very different meaning. And I don't know the nuances of the Greek well enough, but many modern translations are convinced that that last line does not say whatever makes manifest is light, but the last line is actually saying that once you have been illuminated, you are made into light yourself.

That's a very different thought, and I would suggest you possibly reading a variety of translations on that to see how that is rendered. But many scholars believe that the last line of verse 13 is expressing the idea that once you have been illuminated, you become light. So it's not whatever manifests is light, but whatever has been illuminated is light.

It is thought to be a better translation by many. Therefore he says, verse 14, Awake you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. Now who he is, is not all that clear, because it's not actually a quotation from anywhere.

Not anywhere in the scripture anyway. He's not quoting anything in Jesus' words or in the Old Testament, and yet he says, certainly must mean God, or I mean if it was someone else, Paul would have to explain who he's talking about, who he is. The very fact that he doesn't explain suggests that he's referring to something God says.

But where did God say it? Well he didn't say it anywhere in scripture, but most scholars believe, and they have reason for this by the rhythm and so forth of the statement, and you can even see in your Bible that it's set out like a verse of poetry rather than part of a paragraph. Awake you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. Most believe that this is part of a song, a hymn of the early church.

The most popular view seems to be that it was part of a baptismal hymn, that when people were baptized, the congregation would sing this to that person. As they're coming out of the water, it's like they're rising from the dead, like awaking from spiritual slumber, and coming up into the daylight, and that this was possibly sung on the occasion of baptisms. Though there's, I mean that is very, very speculative.

One thing that's not very speculative is that Paul is quoting something. That's certain. And what he's quoting is probably an ancient Christian poem or hymn, because it is written in the Greek as a poem, and it has the meter of some of the ancient known hymns.

So apparently he's quoting some line that was known to his readers, not something from the scripture, but something from probably a popular hymn, where Christ is said to bring

people alive from the dead, and give them light to enlighten them. We know that Paul has already said back in chapter 2 that we who were dead in trespasses and sins, he's made alive. So the hymn embodies that particular truth.

But the reason for quoting it here has to do probably with the last line, Christ will give you light. So that when a person becomes a Christian, they are illuminated by Christ, and they become light. And therefore they should walk differently than those who are in darkness.

Obviously, if I asked you to walk across this room, and I said, but first, let me blindfold you. And I put a blindfold on you, and I changed all the furniture around. And I said, okay, now walk to the door where you perceive it to be.

And yet you can't see anything. You don't know what's between you and the door. You don't know, you know, where the door is exactly.

I turn you around like, you know, playing pin the tail on the donkey. In fact, let's use that as an example. It's a well-known game, pin the tail on the donkey.

You blindfold someone, spin them around so they lose their sense of direction, and give them a pin with a tail, and ask them to find the chart, and direct themselves toward the chart of the donkey, and pin that tail on there. They cannot do so, because they don't see where they're going. They will not do nothing.

They'll do something. They'll walk, but they usually wander aimlessly, usually very far from the direction they should be going. Why? Because they're blind.

But you take the blindfold off and say, would you put that pin on that donkey over there? They'll go flawlessly to the right spot, and pin it right on where it goes, without any difficulty. Why? What's the difference? They're both walking, but one's walking in darkness, and one's walking in the light. And Paul says, let's walk like people who have light.

Let's walk flawlessly in the direction of the goal. The losers out there who don't know the way, and don't know where the goal is, one might expect them to wander aimless, and make all kinds of missteps, and mistakes, and errors, and sins, but don't participate in those with them. Their misbehavior is simply a product of their blindness.

You have no excuse. You're not blind. Therefore, and this really follows from it logically in verse 15, see then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but wise.

Now, the people who are in the darkness walk as fools. They're not instructed by knowledge of where to go. We, however, have wisdom.

We have the light. We know what God wants. We know what the will of God is.

Circumspectly might not be a familiar word to you, and someone just translated it carefully. The literal meaning of circumspect, well, you can sort of guess what it is. You can see two parts of that word.

Circum. We know that prefix from other words, don't we? Circumscribe, circumcision, circumvent. What does the prefix circum mean? Around.

It means around. Circumference. Now, what is spect? What does that sound like? Expectacles? Inspect? Examine or look? Right, it means to look.

So, circumspectly would be looking around is really what it literally means. Walk looking around. Now, why would anyone look around while they're walking? It'd be much easier just to walk and look straight ahead.

Why would anyone, when walking, look around? Maybe because they're afraid of something? Maybe because they fear that there may be dangers on every side? That would be the most natural thing to assume. And so, to walk circumspectly, as I say, many modern translators would just say, carefully. But it actually has the idea of very carefully, in view of the fact that there may be pitfalls and enemies on every side.

You need to walk as one who's got his eyes open and is scanning the horizon and watching for dangers. And is, you know, watching out for the correct turns in the path and so forth. Someone who's paying close attention, visually.

Why? Because you're in the light, you're not in the darkness. So, you don't walk as a fool, you walk as one who's paying close attention. Looking carefully, wisely.

And part of that walk in verse 16 is redeeming the time because the days are evil. The expression redeeming the time is not entirely clear on the surface what that means. It has been pointed out that the word time here is not the word chronos, which we would normally think of as the ordinary passage of minutes and hours and days and so forth.

Chronos. But, kairos. And the word times, when it's in the Greek kairos, it usually means a particular time, like the times of the kings or the times of this or that, like a particular age, a particular category of history or of time.

And so, redeeming the time, there are many translators who feel like the word kairos there means specifically an opportune time, a time of opportunity. I don't know Greek well enough to know if this is good, but many modern translators feel that it's best translated, buying up the opportunity or not missing an opportunity, redeeming the opportunity. The time of opportunity.

And so, if they are correct, and them being Greek scholars, I'm inclined to think they probably are correct. He'd be saying, do not miss the opportunities that are there. To what? To progress in your walk? To redeem, to make best use of your opportunities to

reach others or whatever.

Just in other words, don't waste time. Don't waste your opportunities. Be wise.

Don't be a fool. A foolish person in the darkness doesn't see the opportunities for spiritual progress or for promotion of the kingdom of God or even of their own benefit, clearly. And they miss them.

The opportunities pass them, and they're fools. They miss them altogether, and they just walk off in the direction of short-sighted self-indulgence, and they miss the opportunity to make progress of an eternal sort. But you, don't miss those opportunities.

Buy up those opportunities, because the days are evil. And when he says, because the days are evil, it might mean something like, don't fellowship with the works of darkness, because they're very evil. You need to take every opportunity to make spiritual progress, because the evil of our days would pull you in another direction.

Or he might be saying it in the sense that, because the days are evil, we know judgment must be near, and therefore, the time's short. The actual meaning of this sentence is not 100% clear. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Now, when he says, understand what the will of the Lord is, we might think of it as, well, especially if we think of, how do I know the will of God for my life? Does God want me to marry or want me to not marry? Does he want me to go to college or not go to college? Does he want me to go on the mission field, or does he want me to settle down in domestic life? What does God have in mind for me? What is God's will for my life? That is not the sense in which he speaks of the will of the Lord here, I don't think. I think he's speaking of the will of the Lord in general. The wicked don't know what God wants.

He doesn't know what he's made for. He's in the dark. He doesn't know how to rightly use his opportunities in a way that pleases God, because he doesn't know God's will.

But you do know the will of God. You're not unwise. You know what God's will is.

He doesn't mean that you know instantaneously everything God wants you to do, whether he wants you to wear a blue shirt or a green shirt today. What is the will of God? It's not that minute, I think, in this context, simply because he's not talking about the subject of personal guidance or anything like that into the micromanagement of your daily affairs. What he's talking about here is, in general, the way you live, the way you walk.

It's God's will for you to walk a certain way and not another way. And I think that's what he means. Don't be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

And he says, do not be drunk with wine in which is dissipation or wastefulness. That's a

wasting of an opportunity. If you get drunk, you're really wasting opportunities.

A lot of things are wasteful of opportunities. Drunkenness is clearly one of the most common wastes of time and money and opportunity to make spiritual progress that anyone has made throughout history. There's all kinds of ways to waste your time.

When I hear that the average American watches television for X number of hours a day, I think, how in the world do they do that? I'm not asking how they can do that with a clean conscience. I just don't know how they do it. I don't know how they find the time.

And apparently, such people must just have a totally different perception of what life is for. To me, if I watch two videos in a month, I feel like I'm wasting an awful lot of time. I can't stand the idea of sitting around for an hour every night or two hours every night or even every week.

There's just too much to do. Too much to do what I know should be done. It's such a waste.

People who go out and get drunk on weekends or get drunk in the evenings, they numb themselves from any spiritual sensitivity. They waste an opportunity where they could be pressing into God. It's just another dissipation of time and opportunity being drunk with wine.

But he says, instead, be filled with the Spirit. Now, this statement, be filled with the Spirit, is not an exhortation to get baptized in the Holy Spirit, as if he's writing to a bunch of non-charismatic Christians saying, come on, when are you guys going to get with it? Next time they have an altar call or after, go up and get the hands laid on you and get filled up with the Spirit. These people were Spirit-filled Christians already.

This was the churches of Asia where Paul had ministered. We read of him meeting some people in Ephesus in Acts chapter 19. And no sooner does he baptize them in water, he puts his hands on them, so they're filled with the Spirit too.

He's not writing to non-charismatics. He's writing to charismatics. He's writing to Spirit-filled believers.

But he is, the word be filled, the Greek tense is to be filled in an ongoing way, to continually be being filled with the Holy Spirit. And this is done, he says, by speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. It's also done by giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's done by submitting to one another in the fear of God. These are three things that Paul says are part of being being filled. How do I be being filled with the Spirit? Well, you do so by making melody in your heart to the Lord, speaking to one another in spiritual

songs and psalms and hymns.

You do it by having a continuously thankful heart to the Lord, giving thanks always and everything to the Lord. And you do so by being a servant of all. Being submissive, which is hard, goes against our grain, but it's Christ-like.

And basically, as we develop these patterns, then the fullness of the Spirit is maintained. You know, being filled with the Spirit isn't something you do just once. Even in the book of Acts, the same apostles are repeatedly said to be filled with the Spirit more than once.

And that's because the Spirit is a person, not a fluid. And being filled with the Spirit is just a metaphor for having a particular kind of relationship with this person. And relationships need to be maintained, or else they deteriorate.

And there are people who have been baptized in the Spirit, but have not maintained a relationship with the Holy Spirit. What Paul is saying is maintain this fullness of the Spirit, maintain this relationship, keep it current. And you do this by keeping your heart right, by keeping your attitude toward God and circumstance right, by being thankful for everything, and by keeping your relationships right, by being submissive to each other.

I'll have more to say about those three things and about the following material in chapter 5 next time. But unfortunately, we've run out of time for this session. And so we'll quit at this point.

And it's approximately the point I had planned to quit this session, although I did want to say some more things about verses 18 through 21. So we'll come back to those, talk a little more about them next time, and then go on.