

# **Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 28, Beloved Children of God, Ephesians 5:1-21**

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This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 28, Beloved Children of God, Ephesians 5:1-21.

Welcome back to our Biblical Studies lecture series.

In the past, we have had a few lectures focusing on Ephesians, and we've covered a wide range of this wonderful book by Paul. As you recall from the previous lecture, we were looking at chapter four and how chapter four ends with these contrastive patterns. I drew your attention to the virtues and vices that were taking place and really focused extensively on the subject of anger, the effect of speech, and work ethic, among others.

I drew your attention to the fact that we have to be able to develop this tenderheartedness as Paul puts forward for this unity to be developed in the church. Without going all the way back to what we have been discussing from chapter one, I would like to continue from here since I reminded you that chapter four begins with the ethical part of the letter. So, following that ethical part, Paul said many serious things in chapter four.

And just as he opens chapter five, he makes an inference to introduce a discussion in chapter five. It is intriguing, after talking about how internal dynamics have to function, how people don't have to steal, for instance, but work hard so that they can be of help, they can be of benefit to many others, how they should avoid vulgar expressions so that the addiction will rather edify other people.

With all this, you think he should just cruise through. But look at how he opens chapter five. Chapter five, verses one and two, reads, Therefore, therefore, be imitators of God.

Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. This looks a very easy statement in the beginning, but it's not quite so. In fact, you look at the sentence beginning with therefore, building on the previous discussion, and say, I have been instructing you all this while about how believers have to conduct themselves within a particular identity framework.

We are followers of Jesus Christ; we have learned Christ a certain way; we are putting on the new as people who are made in God's image, in goodness and righteousness. And so, with all this identity issue that he has put forward, now he

places this on a very specific framework of kinship. As you know, we've talked a lot about kinship here, but look at how Paul is framing it here.

The moral instruction here is not a legal framework. I have often said that if you want to make peace, you want to come to terms with the fact that peace is not won in the courtroom. If you want to make peace, peace is not achieved by actually meeting the one who offended you and proving who is right or wrong.

Peace is often achieved within a framework of respect, not a framework of contention to disprove or approve. It is to feel proud or to feel accomplished, and it makes the other person feel inferior and like a loser, because nobody wants to be a loser. In fact, if someone forces you to adopt a particular way of behavior, you are likely not to have the motivation to do that because you feel as though any time you exhibit that particular behavior, the other person will feel that they have the right to dictate how you live your life.

Christian ethics, as Paul narrates, is very much this way. Do's and don'ts are clear, but they are placed within the framework of a family. Here, he is going to underline a significant virtue that has appeared repeatedly so far in Ephesians and that will appear again in the course of our discussion: love.

So just think about that word, love, for a minute. It is going to be achieved within a loving relationship. It's not going to be like a wicked grandfather is looking for an opportunity to hit you on the head at the slightest mistake.

You have to live in fear and terror because you don't know what is happening. If you live that way, you may abide by all the rules, but you may live in fear. And in the end, what is intended for goodwill rather than imprison you.

The philosophers have sometimes talked about moral principles when it is adopted in a certain way, becoming prisons within which people who like to live their lives stay. We are supposed to be released as children of God in Ephesians. And so the other imagery he puts out there, notes there, saying be imitators of God as beloved children.

There are two things I would like to draw your attention to. I will spend a little bit more time unpacking the expression imitators of God. But the one that I will highlight a little bit and pick up in the next lecture is the notion of beloved children.

You have probably heard it said in a church or elsewhere that in ancient culture, men or husbands didn't know how to love. And they actually put up an attitude that sometimes they are stoic; they are legalistic, and they impose expectations on members of the household. Paul seemed to suggest otherwise here.

Paul seemed to be suggesting to the church that, indeed, a loving relationship between children and their father is something that is appreciated and accepted to the degree that he could actually use that as a model relationship between God and children. You probably recall that in a previous lecture, I made a statement that often provoked serious thought in different settings. And that was, how can you give what you don't have? We can only give part of what we have.

And if we have not received love, we cannot give love. Paul is going to call the church to love and to maintain loving relationships with another. But look at how he is going to establish it.

He is going to establish it to say, I know that you are beloved children so when he says to be imitators of God as beloved children. In fact, that particle could be a comparative particle that could translate like children of God saying, you know how beloved children of God will behave, so behave like that.

Or as children of God, which is appropriately translated in most of our English Bibles to mean that since you are children of God who are actually loved, you are beloved. And so, you have received love. And you know from Sunday School, John 3, 16, isn't it? God loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son.

If you have probably gone to Awana, then you probably know something from Romans 5, verse 8. God demonstrated his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. So, we would be grateful if you were a believer in following this course with us. As to the readers of Ephesians, then, they have been loved.

They have received the love that Paul had already mentioned in this letter as the great love. Sometimes, he used all kinds of superlatives in chapter 3, for instance, to explain the love of God. As beloved children, as receivers and beneficiaries of a great love of God, you are now being urged to emulate the lifestyle of your father, who has so shown this love towards you.

Let me correct some misgivings out there. That actually has come to help me. I thank my Western scholar friends who brought Elia on into some of the feminist frameworks and took it too far.

I say I may be feminist in my thinking to a large degree. I was raised by a single mom. I have two girls.

I want to raise my girls to know that they can succeed and excel in a world that is predominantly male run in so many areas. As we see the rise of women in offices and positions, I'm one of those who deeply, deeply appreciate that and want to encourage my children and honor my mother, a single mom who raised me and

worked very hard in business. So, I have all respect for women, but let me qualify some extremes in the feminist discourse that found its way in our discussions on Paul.

Those who took this feminist agenda, especially in our writings in the 80s and 90s, in particular in the New Testament, overemphasized some patriarchal notions and made it seem as if fathers didn't love their children. Today, I will draw your attention to the fact that the data we have don't support that. In scholarship, we have used the word anachronism to explain the fact that we pick up a modern notion and impose it on the ancient world and begin to say that is how they live.

Fathers really love their children. And when fathers love and care for their children, it is highly admirable. Else, when Paul wrote and said to be imitators of God as beloved children, his readers couldn't even relate to that.

Today, if they had fathers who were always bullying them, suppressing them, or dealing with them in any way, they couldn't relate to that. I have friends who were raised with both parents but who talk about how their dad was so brutal that they don't even want to call God father. That is their stream side.

Here, he says, you are beloved children of God, and I'm asking you to imitate God as beloved children of God. So, having qualified that beloved children of God, let's look at what the imitation concept is. Imitation of gods or deities in the Greco-Roman world was a common phenomenon.

As you remember from some of the high school readings you did, you probably realized that you know that some of the Greek gods were even married to different goddesses. And they have children, and some of the children have all these cool names, and you begin to follow all that. That concept of imitating a deity in relational terms was very, very common.

We find it in Greek writings, we find it in Roman writings, and so each god has a particular quality to it. For instance, you have actually heard about Aphrodite. So, American followers in particular, I know you know something about Aphrodite.

You like to talk about it with your friends sometimes. So, let's talk about that, for instance. And you know that Aphrodite is the goddess of love, right? Yes, because these gods have certain qualities.

That's why they qualify them. I will mention one that you may not have known something about that I will bring up in our discussion today is Bacchus. Bacchus, his other name is Dionysus.

That's the god of wine. I mean, if you like to booze, that is what you identify with. And you have the goddess of healing, or the goddess of disease who cures Asclepius, for instance.

Defining the qualities of these gods. So, philosophers, moralists, or rhetoricians will sometimes urge their readers or their listeners to emulate the virtuous qualities of the various deities they have in society. For Paul to write to Christians in Asia Minor to say imitate God is not that remote.

Because they operate within a particular cosmological framework or worldview that we don't have today in the Western world. I must say that outside the Western world, a lot of cultures share this worldview. And that is, there is no such sharp distinction between the material and immaterial world.

There is no such a sharp distinction between the spirit world and the physical world. The physical and the metaphysical are intertwined to form part of one cosmos. And therefore, one can call on a divine being to help them as they live their lives in this particular life.

To be imitators of God is not so remote for this ancient world. In fact, some of them have even different mythologies to the point that they say that sometimes some of the gods, based on their quality, appear in human form at distinct places to show their traits and to show their kindness to their devotees. In the book of Acts, for instance, you remember the story about Barnabas and Paul.

When they thought that they were gods who had come in the flesh and they wanted to come and even worship them, they said, no, no, no, no, we are not the gods. That concept was prevalent in this ancient world. To be imitators of God was not so far remote that we may think about it in the Western world.

Two, the main virtue we see to imitate here is love. So, the God that he's talking about here, who has loved his children and allowed him to call them beloved children, is that they should imitate his virtue of love, which he has just highlighted they have received. You want to know something here as we talk about kinship because I spent some time on this.

You are imitating a deity, but that deity is more than a deity this time. The deity is in a personal relationship with a devotee. So, the God being talked about is not a remote God out there, but it's a God that they have personal relationships with as beloved children.

Lastly, just draw your attention to the concept of imitation of God here. Christ will be brought in as the model of how they may love one another in the church. Do you see what is going on here? He says you are beloved children.

Don't let that surprise you. You are actually beloved children. And you are beloved children of God.

I want you to, on the basis of that, love in imitation of the virtuous qualities of your Father God, who has demonstrated great love towards you. Chapter 1. Then he's going to say, your big brother could be your model. Your big brother Jesus.

So now he introduces Jesus as the model and the love that Jesus exhibited as the modeled love that should be present in the community of faith. If they want to know in practical terms how love has to be expressed or should be expressed in the community, they should look at how Jesus showed this love. Talking about love and how these things imitate God is important.

I thought I should refresh your mind and bring you to the context a little bit. I don't want to overdo it. I just want to show you a couple of things so that you know that what I was saying is something prevalent.

I just want to show you one or two just as evidence of what is going on there. Philo is a Hellenistic Jewish writer from Alexandria. He writes, for what one of the men of old aptly said is true, that human beings do nothing more akin to God than showing kindness.

For what greater good can there be than they should imitate God? In fact, if you follow from the screen, I put the Greek there because the Greek is so similar to the construction we have in Ephesians. I also want to show you something about the Greek context. Musonius Rufus, admittedly, a philosopher I like.

In fact, his works and fragments are very few. At one point, I knew each one of them like I knew most of my New Testament texts. I just like this guy.

He writes, in general, that of all creatures on earth, man alone resembles God. He has the same virtues as he has since we can imagine nothing even in the gods better than prudence, justice, courage, and temperance. Therefore, God, through the possessions of these virtues, is unconquered by pleasures of greed, is superior to desire, envy, and jealousy, and is high-minded, beneficent, and kindly.

For such is our conception of God. So also, a man in the image of him, when living in accord with nature, should be thought of as being like him. And being like him and being enviable, he would forthwith be happy.

For we envy none but the happy. Musonius' point here is this. Animals are not like God.

Human beings are the closest to God we can think about. Since God made human beings in his own image, human beings should learn to emulate his qualities. Sometimes, I'm puzzled when I'm reading some of these philosophers.

And perhaps as you follow these lectures, you probably have been asking, why did this guy spend his time reading all these philosophers like this? Well, call it addiction. And I'll take it. One of the things I find about these guys are sharp philosophers, wise, smart people, and yet so deeply religious in their conception of God, God as the creator, the source of power, even though those gods are not the gods we know, so we can call them genuine gods, they were very, very religious.

Musonius said that it is God who made us, and we should imitate this God. In Ephesians 5:1 and 2, he's calling us to imitate God as beloved children. And let me just highlight one or two things out of this, specifically four things out of this for you before we move on.

The notion of beloved children here specifically resumes the notion of adoption in chapter 1, verse 5, that we are adopted, children. If you remember the session of the study, I called it a breathless invocation. The language of beloved or beloved children implies a relationship with the father.

The notion of imitating a virtuous quality of a father, sorry for omission there, was common as underlined. And therefore, kinship obligation was very, very important in this regard. When he invokes the need to imitate your father, children are now beginning to realize their need to do what is right in society and in cultural norms.

They need to emulate their father, and they need to emulate their father here with his love. I like one of these writers, Pseudo-Isocrates, who said, you must consider that no athlete is so duty bound to train against his competitors as are you to take the thought of how you may veer with your father in his way of life. You should think about racing to emulate the qualities of your father.

And here he says, Paul says, be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love as Christ gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. As Christ gave himself, note the verb there. He gave himself out of love. He did not receive love in this expression and this emulation of the father's quality.

It's a love that made him give his son, Jesus Christ, and which made Jesus, in turn, give his life for us. And so, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are challenged here as the first century Christians to actually love in a self-giving fashion. That is challenging, isn't it? Yes.

And it's just when you do that, it is beautiful. It is almost like a sweet aroma because, as Jesus gave all these things, the natural outcome of that is what becomes beautiful.

Can you imagine how God picked sinners like you and me, dusted us off because of what Christ has done, and gave us the opportunity to be called the children of God?

I remember years ago when I learned that passage from John chapter 1, verse 12, which says, Wow! I noticed how, without growing up with my father in the house, I was connecting with my heavenly father. When this love that gives is present among the children of God, it becomes so beautiful to the extent that Paul will use words like a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God. Let me just remind you about the notion of that sweet aroma.

If you are using King James and others, they use sweet aroma to explain that. It's an ultimate idiom for an acceptable sacrifice. When God actually embraces and takes that which is offered.

I was thinking about images, and I thought, Oh, what an image if I can get nice smelly candles and just light them all and let that flame and aroma begin to come up. It is a sacrifice that pleases God. In fact, in the Old Testament, in two places in Leviticus, I find that the text says, All the fat is the Lord.

Now, forget about the line that says, All the fat is the Lord. Focus on the sweet aroma. My teaching assistant came to me one day and said, I think we should try to gain some weight because we are both skinny.

And I said, Why? He says, We don't have anything to offer to the Lord. Because he was reading Leviticus, and he just came across that all-important line that we don't talk about, that all the fat belongs to the Lord, and we don't have anything to offer. Now, ignore that part and focus on the aroma.

Paul's point here is what is being made in the Old Testament: that the acceptable offering is like a sweet aroma. The love that is exhibited among the children of God comes out with that sense of sweetness. Leviticus 26, I will lay your city's waste, will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing odors, or I will not smell your aroma.

In other words, I will not accept what you offer as pleasing. From here, Paul moves quickly to verses 3 and 4. But, now he says, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and love in the way that Christ loved. As you do so, your expression of love will come like this sweet aroma.

But then look at verse 3, such a big, big, big move. But, contrast, sexual immorality, and all impurity, all covetousness, must not even be named among you, as is proper among the saints. Let there be no filthiness, nor foolish talk, nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead, let there be thanksgiving.



Do you see what Paul is doing here? You have to know something about Paul. I love Paul. Yes, some people don't like Paul.

I just want to tell you, I love Paul. What he's doing here is just showing all the important virtues of love. And he has talked about how giving yourself out in love, when you do it the Christ way, becomes so beautiful and pleasing to God.

In that notion of love, he then turned the language and contrasted it with a twisted expression of love, namely sexual habits, where someone will say, I am showing love, and yet what is actually going on is some sexual desires, passions in the inside, is driving them for not something that gives, but something that receives. The passion prompts them to satisfy themselves and not to give anything to anyone. Paul highlights that the beloved children of God must distance themselves from that.

To the extent that, he said, even these sins, sexual immorality, uncleanness, and covetousness or greed, should not even be named among you. By the way, when we talk about names, we think that naming is just naming for fun. The Greek word for naming or name is also a word that can sometimes be translated as reputation.

It should not even be mentioned among you; it is so deplorable that, within the community of faith, it is not one of the things that you even want to hear that it does exist. Paul says, let it be out of you because it is unfitting for saints. It is not worthy of who you are, in your identity as children of God.

The first three listed here are sexual sins. Sexual immorality, the word *pornia*, note that word, because I'll come back to that word briefly. Impurity and uncleanness are usually associated with the Jewish sacrificial system but are sometimes used in the context of sexual impurity.

And greed, which sometimes is taken like greed, as we have it in English, but it's also the desire to covet somebody to satisfy your sexual passion. You notice the next three vices that are listed there are speech-related. Filthy talk, foolish talk, crude joking.

Paul lists six vices that are very, very serious if I have time to unpack them, which I'm realizing, I don't have enough time to actually spend on what I want to cover in this particular lesson. So, pardon me, and let me just draw your attention to the fact that the first three are sex-related, the second three are, the first three are sex-related, and the second three are speech-related. And Paul is going to contrast it.

Guess how many virtues he's going to use to contrast that. He's going to pull out a big important virtue called thanksgiving. One virtue.

He uses one virtue to contrast the six vices that he had listed. But, do you know that, in our Western civilization, in particular, the virtue of thanksgiving is not appreciated? Have you noticed that? Have you noticed that thanksgiving is not even presented as a virtue?

In the ancient world, thanksgiving was one of the noble virtues that a decent citizen would like to exhibit. They live with a sense of gratitude. I was reading one of the Roman Stoics recently, Seneca, and as I was reading his treatise on benefaction, giving, and graciousness, I was intrigued by how this philosopher, like Paul, emphasized generosity, liberality, and gratitude as that which when people lack, when people cannot appreciate, and be filled with gratitude, they don't live at peace with themselves.

They live with entitlement. Any good that someone does to them, is claimed as if they deserve it, so they don't appreciate people. And this philosopher actually goes on, like what Paul is trying to push forward in his teaching, that the virtue of thanksgiving, which he himself demonstrates in his letters, is a virtue that should be so present if the Christian community would work together.

Thanksgiving. But before we go on with that, let's go back because I drew your attention to the word, *Portia*, for sexual immorality, and I need to clarify some things with that. It's one of those words; if you visit some lectures in different places on this subject, you probably will be getting confused here and there.

The Greek word translates as sexual immorality. In most of your Bibles, the word is translated as fornication. The general meaning of the word, is sexual immorality of any kind.

In fact, in our Bible, sometimes, we find the word being used to refer to harlots and prostitutes. In marriage, this word is used to refer to or to justify the reason why a man may divorce his wife. And even Jesus said that in Matthew, as in the exception clause, this is the only reason a man may divorce his wife.

But you want to know that ancient Greek cultures have different ways of looking at what sexual immorality is. The system was very unfair to women in many ways. As you probably remember, in one of our earlier lectures, I drew your attention to how men had the freedom to be married and have concubines and do all kinds of things that are not appropriate, which Paul likes to discourage.

So, we find that more and more, when they use the word sexual immorality, the nuance is more on the woman's side. A woman who is married or a woman trying to be in a relationship with someone who is married. So, the woman becomes the guilty one.

The man is suspected. But it's not so with the Jews. The Jews had clear moral principles against things like that.

And just in case you have been taught in high school or in college to love Plato so much, let me just expose you to some of Plato's ideas on sexual immorality when it comes to the usage of this language in his thought pattern. Plato says, ideally, no one would dare to have relations with any respectable citizen woman except his own wedded wife. Also, illegitimate and bastard seed, in courtesans, or sterile seed in males, in difference of nature.

Alternatively, while suppressing sodomy entirely, we might insist that if a man does have intercourse with any woman, hired or procured in some other way, except the wife he wed in holy marriage, with the blessings of the gods, note the religious language there, he must do so without any other man or woman getting to know about it. If he fails to keep his affairs secret, I think it would be right to exclude him, by law, from our state honors on the grounds that he's no better than an alien. Do you know what Plato is trying to say here? Let me kill your respect for Plato.

Plato is saying that you know you can cheat on your wife, and for a man, you could be doing all that. Normally, we think it's not a good thing for you to do, but if you are going to do it, you have to know how to keep the secret. And if you don't keep the secret, you are not worthy to be commended in society.

You should not be respected. In other words, as soon as you can do all this, it seems like some of our politicians these days are reading Plato, isn't it? So, Plato comes from that kind of framework of the Greeks, where sexual immorality is rather more the problem of the woman and not the man, and the man can have so many ways to get away with that. That is why if you sat in a lecture with some of my colleagues who study ancient Greek philosophy and compare to virtues and vices in the Bible, some of them will go on to say, hey, forget about sexual immorality in the Bible, because Paul doesn't condemn sexual immorality and what we call fornication.

Fornication, Paul doesn't condemn it. You can do it. It doesn't matter, because if you come from the Greek notion, and what they do is the kind of thing I'm trying to point out to you.

They appeal to people like Plato to say that is the kind of thing Paul is pushing forward, so men can do their own thing. Hey, but women, you dare not do it. Be careful about those who like to do that.

Sometimes, some of these scholars have their own personal agenda. I don't think that in our Christian ethics, the Bible teaches a moral framework where men can cheat on their spouses, and as long as they can hide it, or they can do whatever they

like sexually, but if the women do that, then they are sinning, and the men are not sinning on that front. I don't think that is what Paul is saying here.

I think what Paul is saying here applies to both men and women. For instance, let me remind you about a Jewish framework that Philo actually spelled out quite well, which I think is the framework that someone like Paul was speaking of. He says that in other nations, the youths are permitted, after they are 14 years of age, to use concubines and prostitutes.

That's the Greeks and the Romans. And women who may gain through their persons without restraint. But among us, namely Jews, a harlot is not allowed even to live, but death is appointed as a punishment for anyone who adopts such a way of life.

In other words, among the Jewish community, which I think is where Paul is coming from, sexual immorality is unacceptable within the Christian community. Of course, he's not saying go and kill someone, as we see Philo proposing here, but it's not acceptable. So, let us not pay money to go to lectures that justify our sinful way of life.

I think Paul is trying to say that for those who know the law of Jesus Christ, sexual immorality of any form, greed, uncleanness, or impurity should not even be named among the community of faith. It is so unfitting and so unacceptable for those who call themselves not just children of God but beloved children of God. We should model the love that Christ has shown in the church and not give ourselves up to nefarious and all kinds of promiscuity.

The word he used for Thanksgiving is something I'd like to get back to briefly. 12 out of 15 appearances of the word in the New Testament appear in Paul. Paul likes to talk about thanksgiving.

At the beginning of his letters, he likes to say thanks. He wants to demonstrate that quality, and he seems to have that virtue down by himself. Paul likes to use the language more to refer to thanksgiving to God.

But here, though, because it is one big virtue that contrasts six vices, the language seems to suggest that he's talking about a personal virtue that should be present in the way people deal with each other. Learn to say thank you. Learn to appreciate other people in other words.

When somebody gives or does something to you or avails themselves to you, we are not entitled to the kindness of people that they show us. We should be grateful. Ungrateful people can be so difficult because they think everybody lives to serve them and they cause trouble.

In the world we live in now, at least we are recording this in America, entitlement, for me, is a big issue. Where people feel so entitled that ingratitude is not even greeted with a sense of remorse or shame. Gratitude, thanksgiving, is a virtue.

Paul says, compared to all these vices of sexuality and speech, they should adopt thanksgiving after he has talked about love that they should exhibit. Some of the early writers like Philo, talking about thanksgiving, put it this way, and Moses very appropriately said that the fruit of education is not only holy but also praised for every one of the virtues is a holy thing. But most especially is gratitude, thanksgiving.

The same Greek word is used here in Ephesians, eucharistia, holy. Having learned, therefore, that there is only one employment possible for us of all the things that seem to contribute, sorry, to the honor of God, namely the display of gratitude. Philo's point is that gratitude should be the highest noble virtue we should emulate.

Seneca will put it on his treatise benefits, among all our many and great vices. This guy is a Roman Stoic philosopher, and none is so common as ingratitude. And if you read the treatise, he spent a lot of time almost literally moaning about the lack of gratitude in his Roman context and how bad it is that common decency is not being shown in society. Paul said that for the church in Ephesus and the vicinity, thanksgiving should be a virtue that is clear and seen in their context and not all these aforementioned vices.

He goes on to indict specifically some of these behaviors and issue warnings against their presence. He says that those who are sexually immoral and impure or greedy should know that they will not enter the kingdom of God and of Christ. Wow.

Now, if I had said this in a church, people would not have been very happy, but Paul wrote it. For those who live this kind of lifestyle and not check their sexual behavior or their way of using speech, Paul says, they will not enter the kingdom or inherit the kingdom of God and of Christ. And as he goes on with verse five, he says, for you may be sure, you may be sure, you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is covetous or greedy has no inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ.

And so, verse six, big warning. Therefore, do not become partners with them or let no one deceive you. Oh, sorry.

Let me read here. Don't follow the screen. Let no one deceive you with empty words.

Because of this, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. He says this framework, and now he's going to show a major contrast. In his major contrast, Paul is coming again.

He has contrasted six virtues and six vices with one virtue. Now, he's going to make the image clear of how Christians live their lives in the world. And he's going to use light and darkness to contrast the state of the Christians.

And he's going to show them that they are light. The world without Christ is darkness. And as light, they should live a certain way.

In the imagery he shows, sometimes, when the commentators are explaining them, I find some of them ambiguous. Sometimes, they explain it as if the light is like several flashlights going around. No, I think Paul's point is what I'll try to illustrate with the image I'm giving you.

A place full of darkness, and then you set a light. And the light is so powerful that it's conquering darkness and giving visibility to the people around. They are light, and the world around them is darkness.

Let me read from verse seven. Therefore, do not become partners with them. For at one time, you were darkness, but you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good, and right, and true. And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of these things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible.

For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says, Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Quickly, let me just point out to you how this contrast features here.

He makes a clear contrast between light and darkness, and if you follow that test carefully, the other thing you also observe is how he contrasts then and now. The same people were once darkness, but now they are light. In other words, to become a Christian, things have to change.

Something has to change. Then, he goes on to show how what is born out of their being believers should be explained more in terms of fruit, the natural product of a tree, the natural character out of their identity, and their sense of being. And he contrasts the fruit of light, verse 9, to unfruitful works of darkness.

The fruit of light is that when light is shining, the natural outcome of light is positive. Darkness, though, he says, is this unfruitfulness in the workings in darkness. The things that they do in secret, he says, are shameful.

And then I also want you to note something else. I know sometimes I throw these Latin words around there. The argument *ad Verecudiam*, which is actually a very mouthful scholarly way, is that if you want to impress your friends, you use words like this.

Argument from shame. That is the form of argument in ancient rhetoric that you actually argue that because something is so shameful and embarrassing, decent people should not get close by. And so, you spend a lot of time painting the shameful part of that particular behavior, so as to prompt people to think of their positive counterparts.

Paul makes the argument clear. Live as light. That is the right thing to do.

Walk, using the word that he has used a few times in Ephesians, walk, conduct yourself, live as light. Live as children of light. And literally, verse 9, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

Sorry about that. The fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. And when you do that, walking as children of light, you should try to discern what is pleasing to God.

Do you remember the sweet aroma part when we talked about love that is pleasing? Yes. You can discern what is pleasing to God. You can exercise the rightful judgment.

He goes on to issue another strong instruction to them in verse 11. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness. Stay away from that.

But instead, this is your work. This is what light is supposed to do. Expose them.

For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. Expose the unfruitful works of darkness. When anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible.

Imagine. Imagine yourself in some of the rough places in bigger cities like New York City where all kinds of nefarious activities do take place. Imagine people trying to do drugs and involving in all kinds of inappropriate conduct in the dark.

And imagine you showing up with a big light and just switching it on to make people see what they are doing. What would be their reaction? Paul's point is that the world is full of darkness. Nothing is produced by light, but the essence of being is fruitful.

Hence, unfruitful works of darkness. For believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, our state is better than that. We are children of light who came from darkness.

And in our very lives, note that so far, he has highlighted only two virtues, but he has done them in such a powerful way by showing that the virtue of love should be modeled after Christ. And then, when he introduced thanksgiving, he contrasted it with six vices. When these virtues are inevitable, that could make these people of light, these children of light, namely believers, shine.

And when they shine, they should be prepared for the outcome. The outcome is they expose the unfruitful works of darkness. And what Paul doesn't say I will add is when you expose the unfruitful works of darkness, be ready not to be unpopular.

Be ready to be unpopular. Be ready to face opposition. Be ready for people to call you all kinds of names.

There are people who go to high school or who go to college that are not Christian. They live their Christian lives. They call them priests to ridicule them.

Be ready to be ridiculed. I have heard stories in institutions where young Christian girls are ridiculed for being virgins. Can you imagine that? By just being light, you expose them to the core, and it hits them.

Your very existence makes them feel that you are exposing them to the point they don't want to be. And they react in all sorts of ways. Paul, I like the wake-up call in verse 14.

For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says, Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. For those believers who are in slumber, for those believers who are with one of my daughters who is not a morning person, she wakes up, and she is going like, and I like to tease her, and I say, you know, you want us to go for a fast walk or something, and she'll just go like, no.

So, when I want to do things in the morning with her, I have to get up in the morning and try to make tea. I get some hot water going so that I get myself tea. And then when she comes back, I say, now you can have your cup of tea.

After she finishes her tea, she is fully awake. But before that, she'll go, like, some Christians live like that in their life. We are not able to shine.

Paul says, bringing these quotes in here: Arise, O sleeper, you Christian who is almost slumbering. Is that how you put that word? Who is drowsy or feels like collapsing on a chair, almost falling down? Whose head is going back and forth.

Get up, stand up, shine. Shine so that you can make a difference. Arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.



Now, I've heard only one or two commentators who try to make this applicable to unbelievers say, if you shine like this, then you are by very existence evangelizing to the rest of the world by your way of life. But I like how this quotation, as we end this particular session, mimics what Paul has said. And so let's read that.

Let's read what Paul has said in Romans chapter 13 from verses 11 to 14 and the themes that Paul picks out of here. When you do these things, keep in mind the times we are living in. The hour has come for you to wake up from your sleep.

Our full salvation is closer now than it was when we first believed in Christ. The dark night of evil is nearly over. The day of Christ's return is almost here.

So, let us get rid of the works of darkness. Let us put on the armor of light. Let us act as we should, like people living in the daytime have nothing to do with wild parties.

Don't get drunk. Don't take part in sexual sins or evil conduct. Don't fight with each other.

Don't be jealous of anyone. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ as your clothing. Don't think about how to satisfy what your sinful nature wants.

Thessalonians 5:4 and 7 take the same imagery here. Brothers and sisters, you are not in darkness. So that day should not surprise you as a thief would.

All of you are children of light. You are the children of the day. We don't belong to the night.

We don't belong to the darkness. So let us not be like the others. They are asleep.

Instead, let us be wide awake and in full control of ourselves. Those who sleep, sleep at night. Those who get drunk get drunk at night.

Wake up, all sleeper. Yes. For the beloved children and living as the beloved children, we are urged to understand that we are not just loving children of God, but we are loved to the degree that we are also called to imitate the life of God.

The model to be followed is Christ himself. In order to do that successfully, we should be aware of what not to do. Six vices are listed.

Vices of sexual behavior and vices of speech in the way one speaks. Paul says all these are not appropriate. They are shameful and should not even be named among us.

And he said, on the contrary, let us be filled with thanksgiving. He then goes on to show clear imagery that should help us draw a sharp contrast between the life of an unbeliever and the life of a believer, namely light and darkness. And just in case we are sleeping, he rouses the sleeper in us to say let us rise.

Let's live up to the worth of the calling we have received. Let us live a life that actually shows the world that we have experienced a good God, a righteous God, a holy God, and we have been loved so we can love. I hope that as you think about this and as we pick the rest of chapter 5 in our next lecture, you are beginning to ask yourself, am I still in the dark? And if so, why shouldn't I get to the light? Or am I still sleeping? What difference am I making when I am among unbelievers do they see anything different with me? Or do I behave like a chameleon that when I am among unbelievers I tend to be like them? No, light and darkness don't try to synchronize.

Light shines and exposes the darkness. And I hope that you and I who heed to this call even in the 21st century and do all our best by the grace of God to exhibit this life in the light as children of God who must bear fruit in the light. Thank you very much and God bless you.

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 28, Beloved Children of God, Ephesians 5:1-21.