

14th Sunday after Pentecost
August 26th, 2018
Pastor Matthew Ude

Eph 5:6-21 NKJ ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them.

The wrath of God comes not only upon murders and adulterers, but first and foremost because of empty words, lies and half truth meant to obscure the truth of God and lead people astray. In many ways this is worse than those other sins. When we murder we commit sin and are found guilty before the Lord but when we lie and entice we lead others to sin with us and make them also guilty before the Lord. This is the origin of sin, when Satan used empty words to lead Adam and Eve into sin.

Therefore we should not be deceived into joining with them in their sin. We should not be tricked into being partakers with them. If we join them in sin we will join them also under the wrath of God.

This is also why Paul says **“he ascended on high and gave gifts to men . . . some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.”** Pastors and teachers are the greatest gift you have. They are here expressly for this reason to keep you from being deceived by the empty words of Satan.

Eph 4:14 NKJ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

Paul continues by showing us how we can avoid being deceived by living in the light, because that which is evil requires darkness to hide it. But if we live in the light those works of darkness will be exposed:

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

Paul uses three key words to summarize what it means to walk in the light, or what is the fruit of the spirit: goodness, righteousness, truth.

Those in confirmation hopefully will remember, what is a good work in the sight of God? The answer I give is the same as Paul, although I use slightly different words, love, faith, God's Word.

When Paul here talks about goodness he speaks not about ultimate morality, but those daily decisions that do not have a direct command from God. It is good to spend time with your family rather than sit all evening in front of the TV. It is good to think of others first. So we can easily replace the word "goodness" here with the word LOVE. Putting others first and serving one another.

Righteousness – here we are talking about ultimate morality. We are talking about God's commands. Do not commit murder etc. Righteousness comes from God and we walk in righteousness when we listen to what God has to say and believe that His way is better than our way. So there you have faith, acknowledging that God is right and I am wrong.

And Truth, which ultimately is only God's Word.

Notice that the fruit of the Spirit is in all three. In other words you can't pick and choose. But only when all three exist together do you truly have that which is pleasing to God. Some will say all you need is love and use that as an excuse to ignore God's word. Some will say we should do works of love but faith doesn't matter. Some will have faith and God's word but no love for their fellow man. If you take away any one of the three it is not from God.

¹⁴ Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." ¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Making the most of the time. The word here redeeming in this context is a business word, making the most of opportunity when it presents itself. Pastor Todd Ohlmann told me how his father bought the old school building not knowing what he would do with it. Years later the city bought it back from him for much more than he paid for it originally.

The days are evil. If we fail to make use of the opportunities to witness to Christ and to point out sin to the unbelievers, then evil will take over.

We see how Paul practiced what he preached, constantly making use of every opportunity. When he was waiting in Athens he didn't just sit playing video games on his phone but seized the opportunity to preach about Christ. When he was before Felix the governor and the emperor he used those opportunities also.

This of course takes wisdom, hence Paul's admonition that we should not be fools but walk carefully in wisdom, watching for these opportunities and being ready for them.

¹⁷ Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

I think I told you the story before about my friend's 21st birthday party. Lots of people were coming who were not 21 so we didn't have any alcohol at the party. Some of his secular friends told us it won't be any fun without alcohol. But they did have fun and they told us afterwards in shocked amazement, "This was actually fun."

What we have here is really a parable. Paul takes that common earthly thinking and applies it to what is spiritual. Notice that this follows immediately from "the days are evil." We live in sin and pain and suffering. What are we going to do about it? Instead of turning to drugs and alcohol, which only lead ultimately to more sin and evil, instead be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives not empty pointless and temporary happiness. But instead true joy even in the midst of suffering. Again we have to remember that the joy of the Spirit is not always a smiling face and a spring in your step. Sometimes the joy of the spirit is that in your tears and sorrow you still know that Jesus is with you and that heaven waits for you.

And then further Paul says instead of bawdy slurred bar songs, your lips will sing together psalms, and hymns, and songs of praise to God.

Again we see the example of Paul here, even when he was in prison he rejoiced in the Lord singing with his companions.

Also we have to back up a bit and once again notice that we have here a passive verb, "be filled with the Spirit." Just like last week all these things that we have just talked about are not things that we can accomplish on our own but that God pours into our hearts

We were darkness but by his light He made us light. This means that we were hiding in the darkness because we were and are afraid and ashamed of many of the things that we have done in our life. But Jesus dragged us and still drags us into the light, so yes our sinfulness is exposed and our shame, but then it is also washed away in Him.

And here also it is Jesus who pours out his Holy Spirit into our hearts and through that spirit causes us to walk in the light, so that by his power and strength we walk as children of the light

And because of this then we also: give thanks and submit

²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Giving thanks for everything – yes even the pain and suffering. Often when Kaylee is in the hospital I have to hold her down while the doctors or nurses stick needles into her. From her perspective she might easily think, “why would he do this to me?” But we know it is a good and necessary thing.

So too we know that whatever God allows he will work for our good. Therefore we can give thanks to him even in suffering. We don’t have to like it, but we still give thanks. As Job did, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Finally then this leads us to submit to one another. The opposite of the way our human mind thinks. We always want to claim authority over others and demand that they submit to our will. But the Lord says no each of us should submit to the other. This does not mean that those in authority should give up their authority but that they should use their authority to serve the one over whom they have authority.

Which leads us directly then into a discussion of marriage, which we will take up in two weeks. But as we anticipate Paul’s discussion of the role of men and women, we remember that it begins with this key verse that we should each submit to one another, “in the fear of the Lord.” We are going to have to answer to the Lord for our actions. If we are in a position of authority we are going to have to answer for how we use that authority. If we are in a position to serve we are going to have to answer for how we served.

Thanks be to Christ who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen