

I. ALARMING STATS

- A. Our culture is deeply influenced by two powerful strongholds: sexual immorality and materialism. Today, nearly 90–95% of Americans have sex before marriage, around 40% of births occur outside of marriage, and most couples live together before marrying.
- B. Pornography has also become widespread, with the majority of men and a significant number of women viewing it regularly. At the same time, materialism continues to grip our nation, as Americans carry a record \$1.2–1.3 trillion in credit card debt, with nearly half of all credit card holders carrying a balance.
- C. While younger generations are reporting somewhat less casual sex than previous generations, our culture continues to normalize sexual sin and the pursuit of material possessions.

II. EPHESUS WAS A CULTURE MUCH LIKE OURS

- A. This is why Paul's message in today's passage is so relevant. He wrote to Christians living in a culture remarkably similar to ours, one that celebrated sexual immorality, greed, and distorted views of love.
- B. As followers of Christ, we are called not to embrace the world's counterfeit version of love, but to live out God's true love, exposing the darkness through the light of the gospel.
- C. In today's study, Paul continues to show the church what it means to live a life worthy of all that God has done for us in Christ. So far, he has called us to walk in unity in holiness, and he calls us to walk in love and children of light in the midst of a dark world.

III. EPHESIANS 5:1-14

1. ***Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² 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.³ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴ neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For ¹this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and***

God. 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. 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. ¹⁴ Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

IV. VRS 1-2

1. ***Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² 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.***

B. Earlier in Chapter 1 Paul reminded us what God has done including, choosing us, adopting us, accepting us, redeeming us, and sealing us with His Spirit. The primary purpose for Him doing this is so that we can return to the fullness of what it means to be created in His image.

1. ***²⁶ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; -Gen 1:26***

C. Paul calls us to be imitators of God so that the church can be an extension of the knowledge of God where the church becomes the very vessel that introduces the true God to a dying lost world.

1. ***⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. -Mt 5:48***

D. In verse 2 Paul tells us the primary way we imitate God is by expressing sacrificial love to one another and even the world which becomes a sweet smelling aroma before God.

VRS 3-4

1. ***³ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴ neither filthiness, nor***

foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

a) *In verses 1-2 Paul defines what true love looks like and verses 3-7 he contrasts it with a counterfeit worldly self love.*

- E. In this section, Paul lays out things that are counterfeits and opposite of true love. Sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness all stem from self-love. **Divine love gives sacrificially worldly love takes selflessly.**
- F. Sexual immorality, impurity, and lustful coveting should not even be associated with believers, because they are distortions of the love God designed. True biblical love and pleasure is to be expressed within the sacred boundaries of the marriage covenant, where it reflects God's holiness, faithfulness, and self-giving love.
- G. **Covetousness is called idolatry because it replaces God with sinful desire. Sin is an exchange of a lesser temporary pleasure that replaces an eternal one.**
 - 1. Coveting always worships the gift rather than the Giver
- H. Paul proceeded from immorality to vulgar speech. The Christian's speech should also demonstrate love. "Filthiness" or obscenity refers to dirty speech. "Foolish talk" (lit. stupid words) describes talk that just wastes time, "Vulgar joking" means dirty joking including sexual innuendos.
 - 1. Thanksgiving replaces impurity because grateful hearts are less controlled by sinful cravings.

V. VRS 5-6

- 1. ***⁵For 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. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.***
- B. The city of Ephesus was saturated with temple prostitution, sexual immorality, pagan festivals, greed and idolatry in which many of the Ephesians Christians were saved from.
- C. Paul is warning that a lifestyle characterized by unrepentant sexual immorality, impurity, and greed reveals a heart that has never been

transformed by the gospel, an old man that has never been crucified, and a mind that has never been renewed.

- D. In verse 6 Paul warns from the deception of false teachers who lessen sin with empty words by excusing sin, redefining sin, normalizing in and even promises God's blessing and favor without repentance.

VI. THE WRATH OF GOD (vrs 6)

1. ***"because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience"***

- B. Modern churches often over emphasize God's love while neglecting His holiness and righteous judgment. This is one of the main benefits of teaching books of the Bible verse by verse because it forces us to grapple with the whole council of scripture and to be challenged with the entirety and full nature of God including His wrath.

- C. Bible teacher John Stott argued that God's wrath is not an uncontrolled emotional outburst, but His settled, holy, and righteous opposition to evil.

He wrote that God's wrath is:

- 1. Personal, because it is God's response to sin.
- 2. Holy, because it flows from His perfect character.
- 3. Just, because it is directed only toward what deserves judgment.
 - a) Stott warned that removing God's wrath from the gospel also removes the necessity of the cross. Christ bore God's wrath in our place so that believers could be reconciled to God.
"Without the wrath of God, the cross becomes unnecessary."
- D. Jesus saved us from the righteous wrath of God by bearing our judgment on the cross. For all who repent and trust in Him, God's wrath was fully satisfied in Christ's sacrifice. **But for those who reject Him, the same Jesus who came to bear God's wrath for man will pour it out in His Return on all who remain unrepentant.**

VII. VRS 7-8

1. **⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them.⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.**
- B. The believer's life is incompatible with the values and practices of spiritual darkness. A life that is comfortable with darkness and sin, is evidence that there has never been a true transformation.
 1. ***Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?-2 Cor 6:14***
 2. ***Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."- 1Cor 15:33***
 3. ***God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. -1 Jn 1:5-6***

VIII. VRS 11-12

1. **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.**
- B. We don't impact darkness by participating in it, but by confronting it with the gospel and light of God's word.
 1. ***Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."-2Cor 6:17***

IX. VRS 13

1. **¹³ But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.**
 - a) The Light of God has a two fold effect. It exposes evil then it transforms that evil.
- B. One of the churches' roles is to expose, and even confront evil in our world so it comes to the surface so that it has an opportunity to be changed by the transforming power of the gospel and God's light.

X. VRS 14

1. ***¹⁴ Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."***
- B. Drawing from several themes in the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 26, 60:1, 51:9, and Isaiah 52:9), Paul calls the church to awaken out of spiritual apathy and complacency, and rise up and let the church's light shine in darkness.