

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Live as Children of Light

Ephesians 5:3-20

1998

Introduction

As authentic Christians, we are to:

Imitate God

Live a life of love:

1. Selfless
2. Sacrificial

"Live a life of love", -- a love that is sacrificial and free from any hint of personal gain (either sexual or monetary)...that is the kind of "life and walk" that is worthy of our calling as "saints". In stark contrast to this kind of life is the life of ungodliness or ungodlikeness.

I The Lifestyle Of Darkness

A. Marked by a lack of love

1. Sexual immorality

Porneia = Pornography

Now this statement was made in a day when sexual looseness was even more widely tolerated and accepted than it is today. In this very city of Ephesus, to which this letter is addressed, there was a temple to a pagan goddess, the worship of whom was made possible by a multitude of young priests and priestesses who gave their bodies to whoever could pay the price, as an act of worship. The whole city accepted sexual intercourse as an act of worship and regarded it as normal and proper, even religious -- a sign of dedication. That was going on in this city of Ephesus. That is how tolerantly they looked upon these things. Yet to these Christians, living in such surroundings, the apostle tells them that there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality.

- a. Examples of sexual immortality

Adultery: Sexual relationship with someone other than your spouse

Fornication: Sexual relationship prior to marriage. "It involves any sexual indulgence outside the permanent relationship of marriage, in circumstances where the sexual appetites are used merely as a means of pleasure without any sense of responsibility or care for the partner."

Mitlon

Lust: "Great job God"

Matt 5:27-30 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'
But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already

committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

Pornography [men]: The person you're looking at is precious to God – made in His image for a committed relationship to Him. That individual is someone's wife or future wife, someone's sister, someone's mother

90% of teens accessing the Internet are accessing pornography

Fantasy [women]: Soap operas, romance novels, movies -- these incite ungodly attitudes

In contrast to sexual immorality, the authentic Christian controls the direction of his/her sexual drive and impulses in accordance with God's character and purposes.

But, you say, "That's hard!" Yes, it is! Exercising self-control takes discipline and effort.

1. "Discipline yourself for godliness."

1 Thes 4:3-7 "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."

2. "Take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ."

Phil 4:8 "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things."

2. Any kind of impurity

Akatharsia = Uncleanliness; refers to anything that is rotten, or filthy, or obscene.

Eph 4:17-24 "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being

corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

3. Greed

Pleonexia = The continual lust for more

We frequently associate the word greed with money, but here it refers to greed for another's body. Perhaps the better translation would be passion or lust. It is explained in that connection in Verse 5 where he refers to "one who is covetous (that is an idolater)." One who makes an idol of another person's body, that is the idea. This is what happened to King David. He lusted and was greedy for Uriah's wife, Bathsheba.

Col 3:5 "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."

Immorality, impurity and greed are wrong because they are expressions of selfish indulgence at the expense of others.

Such abuse of others is a total contradiction of Godlikeness and agape love and Paul states that they should not even be named among believers.

a. These first 3 categories deal with immoral behavior

b. The next three deal with immoral communication

And are in contrast to Paul's warning in Eph 4:29 against unwholesome talk.

4. Obscenity

Aischotes = Filthiness or filthy language – Col 3:8

All that is shameless, all that would make a morally sensitive person ashamed must be excluded.

We all at one time lived like this. But as Paul says, ...

Rom 6:21 "What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!"

5. Foolish Talk

Morologia = moron + logic = stupid chatter, silly twaddle

Words without either sense or profit.

Prov 15:2 "The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly."

I met a man this week who could be nominated for this category.

Illogical, nonsensical, drug induced twaddle.

But, even a sober Christian can be guilty of time-wasting, unedifying communication

Matt 12:34-36 "For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings

evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken."

James 1:26 "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless."

6. Coarse joking

Eutrapelia = an easy turn of speech = versatility and witty repartee; flippant talk
(Could mean either dirty jokes or sharp wit)

a. This kind of talk often leaves the other person feeling "put down"

"HELLOOOO?!?!"

Creates humor at the expense of others

James 3:2-10 "We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be."

Now is Paul saying that we can't talk about sex or have a good time together? NO!! Obviously not. But our conversation and humor must always be measured against the effect it will have on others and ourselves – both in our relationship together and with God. If it doesn't build up, encourage or edify others, we are to get rid of it because it fails to meet the standard of "Godlikeness" or agape love that Paul introduced us to in verse one of chapter 5. Instead, Paul encourages us to use our mouths and tongues for the highest of purposes – praise and thanksgiving.

Col 2:6-7 " ... overflowing with thankfulness."

1 Thess 5:16-18 "... give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

B. The rationale for abandoning this lifestyle

1. It is improper for God's holy people – v. 3

- The word means not "suitable" or "unbecoming,"
2. It is out of place for God's holy people – v. 4
 3. It excludes a person from any inheritance – v. 5
 4. It invites the wrath of God – v. 6

Eph 2:1-3 "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."

- a. We are not to be deceived with empty words
 1. Some will try to convince you that God's standards are cultural, archaic, Puritanical etc. They are too demanding. People should be allowed to live how they want – all in the name of freedom. But sin doesn't bring freedom, it brings bondage and death.

It is a reflection of the most ancient lie the world knows, the lie of the tempter in the Garden who said to Adam and Eve, "You shall not die; nothing is going to happen to you. God said you would die if you sinned, but you're not going to die, nothing will happen," {cf, Gen 3:4}.

- b. We are not to partner with such people – v. 7
Symmetochoi = co-participant

II The Lifestyle Of Light

A. Marked by transformation

1. From darkness to light

Col 1:12-14 "[We are to give] thanks to the Father, who has qualified [us] to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Before coming to Christ, we were once "darkness"; but now we are "light in the Lord" and should live as "children of light"

- * We not only have the light of Christ
- * We not only are to walk in the light
- * We *are* light in the Lord

B. Marked by godliness

1. Live as children of light vs. sons of disobedience

Phil 2:14-16 "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and

depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life ..."

We must behave as those who are at home in the light

a. Its fruit consists of all goodness

Agathosyne = The achievement of moral excellence and virtue combined with a generous spirit.

b. Its fruit consists of all righteousness

Dikaioyne = Morally upright, equitable, fair

c. Its fruit consists of all truth

Aletheia = Genuineness and honesty both in word and deed

2. Find out what pleases the Lord

Dokimazontes = Has to do with the testing of metals and so can mean to discover by examination, verify or approve.

For the believer, we are to test everything against the plumbline of God's pleasure.

Follow Jesus' example:

a. "I seek not to please myself but Him who sent me." - John 5:30

b. "I always do what pleases Him." - John 8:29

3. Have God's attitude toward darkness

a. Renounce the fruitless deeds of darkness

Notice it does not say to reject the doers of these fruitless deeds. Instead, the Christian is called to love the unbeliever, but not adopt the unbeliever's standards or fall into his ways.

b. Expose the fruitless deeds of darkness

When the object is a person it means to convince or reprove

When the object is impersonal it means to bring to light or expose, not necessarily verbally, but simply by letting the light of Christ shine through.

We aren't to spend time communicating the things the disobedient do in secret.

1. It brings unnecessary attention to the issue

Satan worship, occultic practices, perversions of various kinds, etc.

"Wake up, O sleeper,
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."

(Probably an early baptismal hymn based on Is 60:1)

Isa 60:1-3 "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."

4. Live wisely vs. unwisely – Eph 1:8-9; 3:10

We are to live "carefully, accurately, exactly" – walking in wisdom vs. folly
Why? ...

Eph 3:10-11 "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. Make the most of every opportunity - 1 Pet 3:15-17

Kairos = Opportunity = A moment in time – not to be repeated

To "redeem the time" is "to make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good."

Col 4:5-6 "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Gal 6:10 "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

6. Understand the Lord's will vs. living foolishly

Foolish = Stupid impudence or senseless folly in action

Understand = To give the mind to something so as to get a hold of it; to grasp

Now, almost always, when one uses the phrase, "the will of the Lord," most people, including most Christians, understand it in terms of guidance. But guidance is not the major problem, or the major factor, in understanding the will of the Lord. God is not half so much interested in what you do as what you are. Therefore, the will of the Lord does not concern itself primarily about what you do, but rather, what you are. Just as Israel was to demonstrate their wisdom by doing the will of the Lord, so we can "walk as wise" only if we understand His will for us.

Deut 4:5-6 "See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

7. Be filled with the Spirit vs. alcohol – Prov 23:30; Gal 5:21

Prov 23:29-35 "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights

and your mind imagine confusing things. You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. "They hit me," you will say, "but I'm not hurt! They beat me, but I don't feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?"

Gal 5:19-21 "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

75% of all crimes are committed while under the influence

Drunkenness leads to ***Debauchery*** = It means to live "without any limits, with reckless abandonment", to throw all restraints overboard and live without self-control.

Instead, the believer is **go on being** filled by the Holy Spirit. It doesn't mean a once-and-for-all reception but points to a continuous replenishment ("go on being filled").

What is Paul saying?

1. Focus on God to resolve your problems – not on the problem
2. Being filled with the Holy Spirit produces an exhilaration and joy that others vainly seek from alcohol and drugs.

The result of living such a life will be that we will:

8. Edify one another through word/song - Heb 10:24-25

Heb 10:24-25 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

- a. Speech
- b. Song

9. Give thanks for everything - 1 Thess 5:18

1Thes 5:18 "... give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

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