

# "Putting Off Darkness: Dragging Sin Into the Light"

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**Believers - What You're Into**

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Sermon Title  
**"Putting Off Darkness  
Dragging Sin Into the Light"**  
Text  
**Ephesians 5:5-14**

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## [Ephesians 5:5-14](#)

For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not become partners with them; <sup>8</sup> for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup> and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

A video of the sermon is available [HERE](#).

## Sermon Transcription:

Dr. Stewart

We're going to talk about Ephesians chapter five, "Putting off Darkness, Dragging Sin into the Light". It seems appropriate doesn't it, Ephesians 5:5-14. From cover to cover, the Bible talks about darkness and light. Sometimes it's literal physical light and darkness like in Genesis when God creates the world, and sometimes it's spiritual light and darkness. It's a metaphor that's commonly used. It's not a unique metaphor. Even Hollywood uses this metaphor. One example is a movie that came out in 2015. A true story, a movie called Spotlight. It's rated R, you can't watch it with your kids. It's explicit in content, so if you watch it, proceed with caution, for adults as well. This movie tells a story of a group of journalists from the Boston Globe who investigate accusations made by a man against a Catholic priest. The man claims he was sexually abused as a child by

the priest. And as the story unfolds 80 different men, who have similar claims against this priests, come forward. The Catholic Church was aware of these actions but did not deal with sin effectively. They did nothing short of paying off some of their victims for their silence. The priests were often moved to different parishes in an attempt to keep sin undercover. Unfortunately, in their new location, the sexual abuse often cropped up again. The Catholic Church was complicit. A pattern of abuse and cover ups involved not only some priests in Boston, but in countries around the world, across the globe. The Catholic Church has paid a price and damage to its reputation and from lawsuits which continued to this day. I'd like to tell you the abuse is gone, but it's not. At one point, in the movie, one of the journalists who's a seasoned veteran remembers he had heard similar accusations against these Catholic priests 20 years earlier, but it was swept under the rug. After all, we're dealing with the Catholic Church in Boston. If you know about Boston and the Catholic church, the Catholic Church is a political force in Boston. The senior journalist suspected that this childhood sexual abuse was going on and and he didn't do anything. The sin continued and grew, 1000s damaged by sin undealt with. As the journalist thinks back, he has deep regret. If he would have been brave, brave enough to stand up, this possibly would have come out and the abusers removed. He said, We just didn't want to think that it was actually happening. It was too disgusting under the umbrella of the church. And it just didn't seem like it could be true, it was too dark. But in the movie, sin is exposed and dragged into the light, where it was dealt with. You know, that's in the secular world. But sexual abuse happens in churches in Hartford City. It happens in our own lives, not sexual abuse, but secret sins we aren't brave enough to deal with, or we've tried and it just keeps coming back. It needs to be exposed and dragged into the light. We need accountability. We need help.

Let's read Ephesians chapter five. And I'm going to read from verse one for context and read to verse 14. "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. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as as proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let 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 become partners with; for at one time you were darkness, but now 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 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 the 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'."

Verse five continues the thought that we had last week in verse three, two different things that he talked about, those who are covetous or greedy, and those who are sexually immoral. Sexual immorality includes all types of sexual sins, from pornography to fornication to adultery to every type of sexual perversion. Covetousness is greed. And

this is the same as calling a person an idolater. This person would worship money or material wealth as a substitute for God. And in Ephesus, as a Jew, if you call someone an idolater it's like the worst scum on the face of the earth, it's like the lowest thing that you could call him. It's an awful sin, greatest of sin. This person, the greedy person or the sexually immoral person, will have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. They're going to hell. Is this for a single sin that was repented of? No, it's a lifestyle. It's a habitual sin. It's a practiced, ongoing sin, greed and sexual immorality. MacArthur says this, The kingdom of Christ and God refers to the sphere of salvation, the community of the redeemed and the place of eternal glory. The kingdom is the rule of Christ and God. For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age, Titus 2:11-12. Every person who has saved and is therefore a part of that glorious rule of Christ and God is instructed by the Holy Spirit, and by the inclination of his own new nature, to forsake sin and to seek righteousness. The person whose basic life pattern does not reflect that orientation cannot claim God as his Father, or the kingdom of Christ and God as his inheritance, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. So this is a warning from Paul. Continue in ways of darkness that you live before and you will be condemned.

Verse six, "Let no one deceive you with empty words." There are people who try to convince you that this isn't true. They say, God's a loving God, He'll never send anyone to hell, He's merciful to love all. Those are empty words which are aimed at swindling you from the truth. Paul doubles down at verse six, last part of the verse, "for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience". God will not tolerate sin, He will judge it. He must, because of his righteous character, because of his holiness, be sure of that. Notice who speaks these words of deception, it's the sons of disobedience. It's their modus operandi, the very way they operate, they disobey God as a rule.

Verse seven, "Therefore do not become partners with them", do not associate with them. What does that mean? That's pretty straight, isn't it? So are you going to hang out with them? No. Would you be a partner with them? No. And if you do, you'll share in their sin, their guilt, and they're eternal punishment.

Verse eight, "For at one time you were darkness". Now notice, does he say here that you "walked" in darkness? No, he says you "were" darkness, that it was your nature, your character. It was who you were, your identity was darkness. Every aspect of your being your mind, your will, your emotions, your spirit. Am I making that up? Well read with me a couple of passages. Ephesians 4:17-19, "You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds." They're thinking is futile there. "They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of the God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves over to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity". That was me, before I knew Christ, and that was you, before you knew Christ. Ephesians 2:1-3, "And you were dead in trespasses and sins". But wasn't there a spark of good in my soul somewhere? No, no, you were spiritually dead. "Sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air". Who's

that? The prince of the power the air? That's Satan. And in fact, he says in other places, we were Satan's children, right? We followed Satan. Now, I didn't do that actively. But I did that. He's "the spirit that is now work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the mind, of the body and were by nature children of wrath". Children that were under God's hot anger. That was our nature. That's who we were, our identity. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 starts much like Ephesians 5 starts but with a longer list of evildoers. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Don't be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revisers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you." Saying once again, that they were identified with the evil list. But notice the word "were" there. You were, you were that but now "you were washed". Your identity has changed. You've been washed by the blood of the Lamb. You've come to God who is light. 1 John 1:5, "In Him, there is no darkness at all". In Him you have become light. You were darkness, now you are light in the Lord, in Him. Now you walk as children of light.

So turned back to Ephesians 5 where we're told in verse two to "walk in love". Now he focuses on the light. This made me think of a hymn by Charles Wesley, it's one of my favorite hymns. We don't sing it much anymore, but I used to sing it. And I loved it. And I memorize this verse, because you know, I have to tell you, I was struggling with this idea that God was completely sovereign over my salvation. I had been studying and I was reading in a book by J I Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God. And he quoted this hymn and it just rang true to my soul. It says this, "Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night", that's complete darkness, that's where I was, "thine eye" (the eye of God) "diffused a quickening ray, I awoke, the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off, my heart was free. I rose, went forth and followed thee". We were lightened by the Spirit of God when we came to Christ. And I was enlightened by an Armenian, Charles Wesley, who wrote those amazing words. We've been rescued by God's mercy. Certainly, as we've seen, we were worthy of his anger and his judgment. But he showed us incredible love. That came through Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross. We were kept, by Satan, from knowing Jesus Christ, and what he did for us. We're told that in 2 Corinthians 4. Satan's blinded the minds of those who don't believe. Hendrickson says this, When we're drawn by God to Jesus, we're given the gift of the true knowledge of God. Psalm 36:9 says, "For with you is the fountain of life", that's God, he is the source of life, "in your light do we see light". We're given true righteousness and holiness, Ephesians 4:24.

Since Jesus is the light of the world, and he lives in our hearts, we become light transmitters. So we radiate light to those who come in contact with us. Jesus said that in Matthew 5:14, "You are the light of the world". And what are we supposed to do with that light? It's not supposed to be hidden is it? You know, there's a little song that reminds me of. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. Let it shine in our conduct, the way we walk in our lives reflects Christ. Just as the moon reflects the sun and the moon has no inherent ability to produce light. But it reflects the light. We are like that. God's brought us into this world as his children, children of light. We're no longer children of

wrath or children of disobedience, but children of light. That is who we are. Let us walk and keep on walking as children of light. Let righteousness and holiness characterize our attitudes.

Verse nine, "(for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true)". How do you know if your children of the light? Well, this is what John MacArthur said, Well, it would be by your decision for Christ. That's how you know. Not by your church membership or by faithful attendance in church or baptism or financial support of the church, those are all very good things, we should do those. But they can be counterfeited by the flesh. None are reliable as evidence of salvation. Jesus said, You will know them by their fruit. And that's what we see here in verse 9. This verse gives us three fruits. First is goodness. And the greek word Kalos. And I wanted to ask our media guy, Did your son's name come from that Greek word? Cool. That's a great name. I thought it must have when I saw that. That's quite a name to live up to. It means intrinsically right, free from defects, beautiful and honorable, great name. Goodness, Jesus said, If a tree does not have good fruit, it is to be cut down and thrown into the fire, Matthew 3:10. Goodness, like apape love, finds its fullest and highest expression in that which is willingly and sacrificially done for others. Notice goodness is others oriented, focused outward. Second is righteousness. This has to do with our relationship with God, focused upward. So first was focused outward, the second was focused upward. Because Christ has given us his own righteous nature, we're to pursue righteousness, 1 Timothy 6:11. 1 John 2:29 says, Everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. Last fruit is truth and it has to do with honesty, reliability, integrity in contrast to the hypocritical, deceptive, false ways of the life of darkness that we live before. In summary, we see that goodness is about our relationship with others, righteousness is about our relationship with God and truth involves personal integrity. In the Christ Centered Commentary, David Platt says very concisely, God is good and right and true. We're to be imitators of him, verse one from this passage. God is good and right and true. We're to be imitators of him. A good goal, the best goal.

Verse ten, "Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord". Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:9, said it this way, We make it our aim to please God. That's my goal. He said, in life or death, no matter in everything, I want to please Christ. How can we do that? The Bible has good advice. We encounter it, there are times it's unclear. But we step out in faith, walking as we believe Jesus would walk, in faith by the Spirit with Jesus attitude, gentleness, kindness towards others. We should pray for God's help in discerning how to be pleasing to Him. That's what this verse says. Let us be sensitive to turn where he leads.

Verse eleven, "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness". That's also pretty straight, right? No need to get out your Greek Lexicon here. How much darkness are we to be involved in? It might be with the goal of building a relationship or witnessing. So how much? None! What are the works of darkness he listed in verse three and four? They are sexual immorality, greed, impurity, filthiness, crude jokes and foolish speech. The pastor talked about these last week. These can never glorify God, they will never bear fruit. They can never bring inner peace or satisfaction. They are darkness. Calvin said we must beware of joining or assisting those who do wrong. We must abstain from

giving any consent or advice or assistance. Verse 11 says but instead expose or reprove them, depending on which version you have. This literally means to drag into the light that they can be seen for what they are. He is instead to expose them. MacArthur says to ignore evil is to encourage it, to keep quiet about it is to help promote it. The verb translated to expose can also carry the idea of reproof, correction, punishment or discipline. We're to confront sin with intolerance. That's an interesting concept in the world we live in, isn't it, we're to confront sin with intolerance in this age of tolerance. Sometimes such exposure will be direct, and other times indirect. When we are living in obedience to God, that fact in itself will be a testimony against wrong. When people hear us talking with purity instead of profanity. You know, when I was a high school student, I had a pretty foul mouth. And I had a coach who had a pretty foul mouth too, and he rebuked me for my words. That was kind of a humbling experience. My speech changed when I came to Jesus. And when people are around you and they know you're a believer, it kind of changes things. I have people that curse and apologize, you know. They observe us speaking truthfully, rather than deceitfully. Our example itself be a rebuke of selfishness, corrupt talk and falsehood. Dishonesty is terribly uncomfortable in the presence of honesty, even when there's no verbal or other direct opposition. Failure to speak out against and to practically oppose evil things is a failure to obey God. Believers are to expose them in whatever legitimate biblical ways are necessary. Love that does not openly expose and oppose sin is not biblical love. We see that in 1 Corinthians 13, Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but in the truth.

Verse Twelve, "For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret". It's clear from this verse that there are some things God wants us to remain ignorant of. Be wise concerning good and simple concerning evil, Romans 16:9. But how can we do this as leaders in the church, for example, don't we have to have a knowledge of what we're dealing with? Well, I went to an old friend for a word on this. A guy whose is now gone, who died but his works live on, Jay Adams has some good words to say about this particular verse. He's dealt with a little evil in his time, about every form you can imagine. And he has this to say about this verse, The counselor must be careful not to be too personal about sexual sin. There are counselors who get their kicks out of wallowing in the details of a sexual liaison. That is sin, a type of voyeurism. Every counselor, therefore, must be extremely careful to go only so far in eliciting and discussing matters of detail as is necessary, anything that titillates him is wrong. Things that go under the cover of darkness in secret are disgraceful, and not to be talked about in detail. Only the one confessing the sin thinks he or she must tell all, giving all the shameful details, not so. This passage forbids it.

Verse thirteen, "But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible". Light makes sin obvious. We read that in 1 John 1:5-7. As we consider that verse for just a second, God's perfect light, in him there is no darkness at all. We say we have fellowship with him, but we still walk in darkness. When we do that, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, we had been in darkness now we walk in the light, it's kind of like me, with my white shirt, walking in a coal mine. And you know, if you brush up against the wall, what's going to happen? You're gonna be black, right? You're going to have blotches of black and that's kind of what it's like when I'm going to God who is light. And I've been involved in darkness. My sin shows up. And what do I need to do? 1

John 1:9 says, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us, wash my black shirt, from all unrighteousness. Forgiveness, cleansing as I walk in the light, we have fellowship with one another and I become convicted of my sin, I confess and forsake it and he cleanses me with his blood, his light shows up my sin. It becomes visible, it drags sin into the light. And we're called to expose sin. David Platt says this about verse 11, Light exposes the sin of unbelievers. The word exposed carries the idea of correcting or convincing someone. Walking in the light does not mean avoiding contact with people. It's not becoming a monk in a monastery that is away from everybody else. Walking in the light means living a holy life. It means confronting darkness. Though the text does not tell us how to do this specifically, it surely means with words and deeds. We need wisdom, discernment, gentleness and courage to know how to confront and expose the works of darkness.

Galatians 6:1 says as we come to a person that's in sin, we're to come with a particular attitude. We're not to have an attitude of superiority or I'm better than you. It's got to be an attitude of seeing us as equal, sinners. I can be tempted too, I have to be careful as I come to that person. So we need discernment, we need gentleness as we go to someone to talk about this. And in the Galatian passage, it's a believer. Paul says the light illuminates darkness (these secretive and shameful deeds) as evil is seen for what it is. Here the life and actions of the believer expose the works of darkness in the world. JB Phillips's paraphrase is helpful. And he says this, "It's even possible (after all, it happened to you!)" It happened to you and me, this same thing, where we were in darkness and we turned to light. "It is even possible for the light to turn the thing it shines upon into light also." So we want to see people changed, don't we. We want to bring light to their situation, to their darkness. We want them to come to Jesus.

You know, my wife shared with me a book she read, but for me it was an audible book, about a young woman, Rachael DenHollander. She was sexually abused by her physician during office visits with her mom present in the room. Dr. Larry Nasser was her sports medicine physician and a prominent physician from Michigan State University who abused young girls for years and years and years, including Olympic athletes. One was Simone Biles, who you saw this last summer. Rachel was 15 years old when this happened and immediately reported it to her coach. There was an investigation of sorts, but nothing was done. Years later, when Rachael was grown, with a family, a story came out from a gymnast that was abused by Dr. Larry Nasser. Rachael, now at this point in her life, was an attorney and decided to tell her story. There was immediate media coverage, she was raked over the coals for her accusations in the media and in her community. You would think that as a victim and an advocate of other women, she could find help in her Bible believing church. But you know what happened? She and her husband were punished and abandoned by the church in the middle of the struggle. This is a very sound church, a very sad story. They did eventually find support in another church. Despite the pressure, Rachael persisted and eventually 150 other women came forward during this prosecution. Dr. Nasser lost his medical license and was sent to prison for his offenses. Rachael prayed for him during the process and reached out to him during her victim statement after his conviction. Rachael continues to be an advocate for women, who have suffered sexual abuse by men in positions of power. She's a good example of a young woman, who at no small cost to herself, dragged

sin into the light. David Platt says this, The believer is called to expose the darkness and the corrupt places of our world. Like where young children are traffic enslaved and forced to work against their will. And where power is abused in other ways. We must bring the light of justice, exposing shameful secret of sins, and bring the transforming the light of the Gospel to everyone, including the guilty and enslavers themselves.

Verse thirteen, all things "become visible" when they're exposed by the light of God's Word. As children of light were to hold everything up to the light of Scripture, to expose and seek remedy for whatever is evil. In the Middle East, there are shops which are along streets and they're dark and to get a good look at what you're buying, you pull out the merchandise and you walk outside and you hold it up to the sun. And you look at the article, you can see it for what it is, any flaws or imperfections become obvious. When sin is revealed, it loses its hiddenness and is seen for the ugliness it is drag it into the light. Tony Evans says this, If cockroaches are in a room, all you have to do is turn on the light. What happens? They scatter like crazy. If you live as children of light, shameful deeds will be exposed by your lifestyle, and words that reflect God's standard. You know how Jesus got in trouble with the religious leaders? By being Jesus. He just showed up, speaking truth, living righteousness, and he got in trouble. Is it going to be different for us? If you'll speak for the truth, you're going to take heat. Light has an amazing ability to dispel darkness. We need to trust that.

Verse fourteen, our last verse, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you". You know, most of the commentators I read interpret this as a verse about salvation. A few people apply it actually to believers. And I'd like to do that too because even if it doesn't completely apply in the verse, that's a good thing to think about. First, the unbeliever, he's dead. That's clear. And the believer, he's lulled to sleep. Some of us get involved in sin and we get lulled to sleep. The sleeper is unable to comprehend or take anything in because he's sound asleep, a spiritual Rip Van Winkle. Do you know Rip Van Winkle was? These could be believers who are in sin. They're ineffective for God. But God doesn't leave them alone. He yells at them, Get up! Repent, turn to the light! Turn away from the darkness and Christ will shine on you. Christ will cleanse your sin. If you honestly come and ask to be forgiven. That's true for the lost. You will be restored as children light who are shining for him, as you should be. There's also these spiritually dead, they have no spiritual pulse or blood pressure, no breathing, they're dead. This passage clearly leans towards man's responsibility, he calls them to get up. And how much ability does a dead man have to get up, like Lazarus? Not any. He must create a new heart in us and take away the stony heart. He must give a spiritual life through his spirit, regenerated by his grace alone. He awakens and arises from the dead as the light of Christ shines on him. And he too becomes a light transmitter that will shine on others. Praise God! He's called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

My prayer is for God to help us, to drag sin into the light. We've heard, here in these accounts, of the brave actions of some people. Oh but that we'd be willing to do that in our own lives too, to find accountability. Help us, Lord, to be light in the darkness. Go light your world. Let's pray. Lord, we're thankful that though we were darkness that you've shown your light into our hearts, that you cleansed our sin and made us acceptable to you, only through the sacrifice of Your Son Jesus. We thank you for him,

that you sent him as we're reminded at this time of year, as a humble savior. We pray that you'd help us to be brave when we need to be brave. Help us to be gentle when we need to be gentle. Help us to be walking with you and trusting you in faith as we walk this road and may we shine your light to others around us. In Jesus name. Amen.