



Love Incorruptible
#9 Imitators of God
Sunday, June 25, 2017
Courage Church, Detroit, MI

Today we are beginning chapter 5 of Ephesians. We are going to break Ephesians 5 up into the next three weeks... I am really excited to dive into this, I have been thinking a lot about chapter 5, especially the last section which we will cover two Sunday's from today when Paul equates marriage to

Christ's relationship with the church. We will touch on that briefly today...

Today though, might hurt a little for some of you... and that is okay. Call them "growing pains" - because in a lot of ways, it hurts to grow up. But it would be far more harmful to stay an infant forever... which is what a lot of people do... A lot of people get saved, but they never want to actually make Jesus Lord of their lives and start living for Him... They will claim Him as "savior" - but not necessarily as "Lord."

See, what Paul does in the passage that we are about to read, is he explains to us how crucial it is that our lives imitate God... that we reflect Jesus Christ in all that we do...

but then he dives into sin...

and he talks about the way that the sins in our lives, and in our communities... how those things really stain the image we are called to bare.

But here is kind of the big idea... of the whole message that I want you to understand going in... because really for the first time in Ephesians, what it sounds like Paul is doing is giving us RULES. Don't do this!

Don't do that!

But what he is actually doing, is he is showing us the kind of lives that draw other people to Jesus... He is showing us a way of life, that is so special...

it is something so attractive...

that when other people see it, they can't help but buy in... they can't help but say: "I don't even really know what it is that is different about that person... I don't even really know what it is that is different about *that* community... BUT MAN IS IT ATTRACTIVE. I want WHAT THEY HAVE.

See, the church will always either be the thing that attracts people to Jesus or the thing that distracts people from Jesus. and we want to be the former.

So lets get into this... lets open our bibles to Ephesians chapter 5, verse 1-14:

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ 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. 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 become partners with them; ⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 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.”

Let's Pray

Paul starts by saying to be imitators of God. The reason that this is so incredibly important, is this... Ephesians says *this* of the church:

in one place it says that we are Christ's body, in another place it says that we are his temple, and in another place it says that we are his bride. The church, today, is the first, and sometimes the ONLY image that non believers get of Jesus... we are the first thing that they see. And if they look at us and they see something that doesn't reflect God... they aren't going to know that we are NOT reflecting God.

As far as they are concerned, we do reflect God. We do represent God. And if we live our whole lives the same way as the world lives, then the world will look at us, and see what they think is a reflection of God, and they will think: God is just like that. Which leads to the thought, "is there really anything different about this God? Is there really anything different about people who worship, and who follow, this God?"

So Paul gives us a few "don't do's" - a few things that would stain God's image if the people who represent him did those things... and we will look at the specific things that he mentions, but I think overall, there is a much bigger thing happening here, than just Paul saying "don't do this." "Don't sin. Don't be sexually immoral. Don't have crude conversations with each other."

Lets take a closer look at what he does here...

verse 3:

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness *must not even be named* among you, as is **proper** among saints.

The word proper is the Greek word "prepō" and it means "to fit"

Paul is saying "these things do not fit in the Christian life" - a life that has been transformed by Jesus Christ does NOT look like these things!

The Old King James says it this way... “let it not even once be named among you”

That is actually really powerful.

Could you imagine that? If someone could come into this place... and right away, they know... “these people are different... they are really different... but I don’t know what it is... I can’t quite put my finger on it...”

but as they meet people and start to be a part of conversations, they notice that the talk is always uplifting... its always life to them... they always leave wanting more...

nobody is talking about other people, they aren’t tossing around crude jokes... there is just a purity there, an innocence among us that can’t really be put into words but yet it seems to have taken on flesh and blood in our community... to the degree that someone comes in here and spends a little time with us, and leaves saying “There is not one thing that I can say about them that was off... there is not one thing that was weird, or crude, or harmful, or hostile, or sexual.”

Not one thing. But how does that even happen?

look at what Paul goes on to say, as he expounds on it: (verse 4, 5)

Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ 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.

This may be the most hardcore thing that we get in all of Ephesians. This is the most difficult language to swallow.

and what I want to do, is make a bit of a case for you... because the truth is, that when you get language this strong, it is overwhelming. It seems to suck the joy out of the gospel in some ways, because suddenly you begin

to think, “if I do anything wrong... I lose my inheritance...”

But there is a different way to look at this... if you remember, a couple of weeks ago we talked about how in chapter 4 Paul tells us “let the thief no longer steal” - but he doesn’t just give him something to stop doing, instead he gives him something to replace stealing with... he says, “rather, let him work with his hands so that he will have something to give to anyone who has a need” - instead of just taking away something, he shows the thief how to fill that void... that desire he has... in a healthy way... well he does the same thing here. He doesn’t just give us the problems... he actually gives us the cure.

and so I want to try and make a case for the answer to living this way, and living in such a way that when anyone comes into our community, they see people who imitate God... living in such a way that these things aren’t even mentioned ONCE among us, all rises and falls on this one word:

Thanksgiving.

“Instead, let there be thanksgiving.”

If you have *true* Thanksgiving, you won’t have covetousness... you won’t have impurity. you won’t have sexual immorality.

And this is what makes the whole first half of Ephesians so incredibly significant. Because Paul starts by giving us the gospel, over and over before he ever gets into a single rule... and what Paul is saying is that IF you believe that... if you believe the mystery of the gospel... that you are saved ONLY BY GRACE, not by works... if you believe that Jesus came and broke down the dividing wall of hostility... and that he has molded your life like a piece of art to be a part of something bigger than yourself...

and when you look in the mirror and you see what you are... and then you see what he did, and you start to realize that the person you are *now* doesn’t have to be the person that you are tomorrow... and even though the person that you may be apart from Jesus wouldn’t stand a chance at salvation when that day of judgment comes... when you actually realize

that you aren't going to be judged for what you did, but instead, you will be judged by what he did, FOR YOU...

the question we must ask in that moment is: What does that produce in you?

Because what that produces in you *will tell you* if you actually have accepted Jesus to be Lord of your life. If it produces *nothing*...

if *that* means nothing to you at all, and you think, "this doesn't really change much..." odds are you don't understand what it is that actually took place.

One thing Drew always says, and he says it about the most simple things, (it's hilarious) is he says: "This changes everything." He said it on Thursday, I told him at Kids Club "we have a slip and slide today" and he said: "This changes everything."

That is exactly the way that we should look at the gospel. This truly is the one thing, that changes everything.

and the thing that it should produce in you, probably more than anything else: is Thanksgiving. It is the word "*eucharisteō*" (you-har-estay-o) - bundled into this Greek word are the Greek words *charis* and *chara* which means "grace" and "joy" - when you understand how every finite detail of your life all the way down to your salvation is grace, it produces unspeakable joy, which equates to thankfulness.

and when that Thanksgiving is genuine, the behavior side of things begins to happen automatically.

Not because you aren't *trying* to do the right thing... part of growing up in Christ means learning how to live your life with INTENTION... but the difference between the old and the new self is: the old self WANTS to give way to the flesh... the new self WANTS to resist it.

That doesn't always mean you will never fail at this... but the heart of someone who has been transformed by Christ doesn't want to do things that you KNOW were the very things that killed Jesus.

Let me say it this way... this is “the hard to hear way.” Jesus Christ died on a cross, literally, physically paying for your sins... the bible said he was crushed on our behalf... he was pierced for our transgressions... bruised for our iniquities.

If you love someone, and you know that that person gave up everything in their whole life just so that they could be with you, they moved all the way to Detroit, and gave up that amazing job in San Francisco, they gave up the loft with the view of the bay, and they left all their friends and everything they have ever known... to start over, here with you... like, its obvious that one person carried most of the sacrifice in this relationship... but you both benefited the same way in your relationship together... would you not WANT to do everything you can to let that person know how thankful you are for them? How much you love them?

See the beautiful thing about the gospel is that we did nothing, and God does everything. But the Christian life is our response to the gospel. and our response is A RELATIONSHIP.

And Paul gets very specific... he says that people who are in relationship with God... and are in community with one another... there are certain things that must not be named among them.

And I want to show you something, I want you to see the way that Thanksgiving is a bit of a thread that holds these together.

I want to take you to the book of Genesis... and look at what are essentially the very first TWO sins recorded in the whole bible... then I want to look at the tenth commandment.

so starting in Genesis... this is before the Ten Commandments, and the law was even given...

and this is the significance to that...

it wasn't until the law was given that things were laid out like "thou shall not murder..." or "thou shall not covet what is your neighbors..." or "thou shall not commit adultery."

Before then, all people had was their HEARTS.

In some instances God would speak directly to them... beyond that, it was what they had, and what they passed down to their children... but something happened in their hearts, and progressively it got worse and worse and worse until finally God had to send a flood that destroyed the entire earth, and then start over.

In fact... Genesis 6 (v5) tells us this, as to why God felt the need to start over... it says:

"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great, and that **every intention** of the thoughts of his heart was **only** evil *continually*."

It is so specific to emphasis how over the top things had gotten. Every intention... only evil... continually! Their hearts were so corrupt that EVERY THOUGHT was evil. Which is really crazy. Because *that* is how bad it got, but look at where it started... it started with something that seemed...small.

it started with ONE of the things that Paul lists, and that is covetousness. Covetousness is actually a root to many, many sins. The root of even sexual immorality, is covetousness.

So go back to the garden. Adam and Eve have it all, right? God gave them everything... you would think they would have THANKSGIVING. Because everything their eyes could see was theirs... 99.99999 percent of everything was fair game for them... there was just ONE tree that was off limits.

So serpent shows them this fruit, the bible records a conversation between the serpent and Eve, but it says that Adam was right there with them... and the serpent says "even though God told you that if you eat this fruit, you will die.... he was lying." You won't die. IF YOU EAT OF THIS FRUIT, THEN

you will know what God knows... you will have the same knowledge that He has.

YOU WILL HAVE WHAT GOD HAS.

So to the people who had EVERYTHING, the serpent convinced them: "there IS EVEN MORE TO HAVE."

And when they were convinced that if they ate of the tree, then they would have MORE than they have now... they immediately did it.

it was birthed out of coveting something that was not theirs. IT DIDN'T MATTER HOW MUCH THEY HAD, they thirst for more... because just like Proverbs (27:20) says, "hell and destruction are never full, therefore the eyes of man are never satisfied."

Then comes their son, Cain. (Genesis 4)

We know the story of Cain and Abel. It was the first murder. But yet again, it was linked to coveting. It began with coveting....

The bible says that Abel was a keeper of sheep...

and Cain was a keeper of the ground.

and Cain brought the Lord a first fruits of the ground as an offering to the Lord, and Abel brought the Lord the first born of his flock... and again, this is before the law... this is the first instance recorded in the bible when anyone GAVE ANYTHING to the Lord...

but for whatever reason, the Lord accepted Abel's gift, but he did not regard Cain for his gift. We don't get a reason why... but what we do get, is that fact that this made Cain angry.

because His brother had gotten somewhere with God, that Cain hadn't gone. Its like we talked about last week, how anger is a slow burn... something burned up in Cain over the fact that the Lord approved of Abel's gifts and disregarded Cain's gifts...

and something destructive was birthed in his heart toward his brother, because Cain wanted what Abel had.

but I want you to catch this. God himself tried to intervene in the life of Cain before he killed his brother. And he gave him a warning that is so often overlooked but I think if we see this, we may understand our own sins a bit better.

Genesis 4:6-7

The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?
7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, **sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.**”

I want you to think about this statement right here... sin is crouching at the door.

Its desire is contrary to you, but YOU **MUST** RULE OVER IT.

You know the right thing to do, even though you WANT to do the wrong thing... you must not!

But the way that the Lord says this to Cain, really, in my opinion, explains why so many of us give in to our desires... when we are supposed to rule over them... see, God says that sin is crouching at your door.

Think about that... think about if you were to hear a knock on your door... I am at your door knocking... and you have one of those little windows you can look out and see who is there, but even though I knocked, I decided to crouch...

you would look out the window, and you would see nobody. You would think “I must have been hearing things... there is nobody there!”

I am there... but I have made myself seem so small that you don't even know that I am there.

If I am crouching... I may seem small. But in reality, I am not small...
If I am crouching... I may seem like I am not there from a certain
viewpoint... but I am there!

That is how most of us view our sins... because it always seems like they
start small, we barely even notice them... because its subtle. Coveting
someone else's house is an easy thing to do...

Dawn and I live in a construction zone, and it can be difficult to see other



people's houses that are
absolutely gorgeous and
even their modest houses
when they are not under
construction... that may
seem small... it may
seem subtle... because it
is easy to do and not
really feel guilty about
doing.

but what starts small, as it
is fed, always grows.

but even when it is small,
it is still sin... it may feel small, even invisible, because it is crouching, but
its still the same sin, it is still just as destructive and harmful.

That is why Jesus went after *intent* so strongly in the sermon on the
mount... think about it... the intentions of peoples hearts got so out of
control in Genesis, that God saw no solution but to start over completely...

and people are JUST AS HUMAN NOW, as they were then...

Jesus knows what goes on in the deep places of our hearts, he knows that
the roots of transgressions are planted through iniquities. Through our
inward motivations...

So He says “okay, lets dig out the root of this, rather than just cut the weed from where it first comes out of the ground.” He says: “you have heard the law, it says don’t murder...” BUT I SAY TO YOU... if you even hate someone...

If in your heart there is a *desire* to hurt someone, or a *desire* that something bad would come on that person, you are guilty of murder.

You have heard it said, you can’t commit adultery... but I say to you: its so much bigger than that. If, in your heart you want to commit adultery... you are guilty.

Why?

Take sexual immorality... it began a long time before it ever happened. It began by coveting. It began by wanting something that you did not have.

but as it grows, suddenly, you find yourself in a place you never thought you would be in, wondering... What happened?

sin was crouching at the door...

and what seemed innocent lead to something destructive.

See, to me, if I were to be completely honest, in my heart I would think “sexual immorality!!! THATS A BIG SIN! Thats a big deal!”

But wanting something that someone else has... that doesn’t seem so big.

Its just a heart thing, and it can even be motivating... right? You see someone else’s house and you think: “I want to have a house like this!” and it can motivate you toward that...

But here is the truth about coveting... people miss this a lot... it existed long before there was a law about it, and it was such a big deal, that it was put in the ten commandments, and even today it is still a huge deal.

But the 10th commandment, the one that we think says “thou shall not covet” - is actually an absolutely fascinating commandment.

You see, today, we hear the world, “covet” - and in English, it is all sorts of negatives... its just a bad word... in the Greek, which is the word Paul uses, *pleonexia* (play-a-knox-see-a)... it is basically the same... it is ONLY bad... it means “to be greedy or to desire to have *more* than you have...” In fact, the Greek word *pleonexia* (play-a-knox-see-a) is basically the entire 10th commandment all in one word...

but when you study the actual 10th commandment, the word we translate as “covet” is the Hebrew word *chamad* (ha-mad) and it actually is a really GOOD word... a really positive word, with really GOOD implications. it simply means: to delight in.

and I want you to see how understanding the 10th commandment is so crucial to understanding what Paul is saying here... Because what Paul is doing in the entire book of Ephesians, is he is setting the tone and the standard for what the church needs to look like.

And everything about it IS WAY BIGGER THAN BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION.

See, the tenth commandment is different than ALL THE OTHER COMMANDMENTS.

Many of the Rabbi’s actually considered the tenth commandment to be a reward, for keeping the first nine. Because it does not say “thou shall not covet”

It doesn’t say, “thou shall not delight in anything.”

It says, very clearly, “thou shall not delight in what is NOT yours.”

The BIG problem with coveting someone else’s “ANYTHING” is it means that you aren’t delighting IN WHAT YOU HAVE... In what God gave YOU!

The tenth commandment is about watering your grass, rather than always looking next store wishing you had your neighbors grass.

You should covet... as in Hebrew, "*chamad*" the things that God *gave you*. You should delight in those things... you should delight in your family... in your kids...

I mean, just last night, I was sitting in bed wrapping up today's message, and the kids wouldn't sleep... our two littlest were being kept awake by all of the fire works going off in the neighborhood, and they were being pretty goofy about it but they said that they were scared... and it was really late and it was getting frustrating.

I just wanted them to sleep... because I wanted to work on THE NEXT THING rather than enjoy THAT MOMENT. and then Dawn just said to me "they are afraid, they need comfort." - and finally I set down my work... I set down what I was doing to make my "tomorrow" function, and for a moment I went, and I lived in "today." and I had a delightful time comforting and bonding with our daughters, and when I finally did leave their room, and got back to what I was working on... I was delighting in the moment that I had just had.

We should delight in those things.

you should delight in YOUR wife, even in YOUR HOUSE... you can't worship it... they aren't idols... but *they are blessings*. God doesn't want us to hate our lives, he wants us to DELIGHT IN OUR LIVES.

and the idea of the 10th being a reward is simple... if you keep the first nine commandments, which were put in place for your benefit to give you the best and fullest life possible... then you won't want anybody else's life... you will have a great life... a life that you will delight in.

the problem comes when, rather than being THANKFUL (as Paul puts it) for what God has given us, and enjoying those things, instead we delight in someone else's "things"... someone else's house, someone else's car, someone else's wife...

so When Paul talks about covetousness, what he is saying is...

YOU WANT MORE THAN YOU HAVE.

Because at the core of those desires, is a heart condition that says to God "You have NOT given me what I need... You have not looked out for me and my best interests..."

When Paul writes his first letter to Timothy (6:6-7) he says that "godliness WITH contentment is great gain..."

when you are content, you are winning... then he says:

"for we brought nothing into this world and we will take nothing out."

and ultimately, the reason that Paul emphasizes so much of the gospel in the first half of Ephesians, is because he is trying to cultivate in us a thankful heart... a heart that can't even believe how amazing the grace is that we have been given... a heart that can delight in what we DO have... and most importantly, can delight in WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR US.

If you can learn thanksgiving... you will instantly kill the *vices* that Paul describes in these passages.

But here is the truth... one gives birth to the other. Living life in a discontent state will lead to you, trying in your OWN strength to find things that will fill you... and it will feel so harmless at first, because sin is crouching at the door... it doesn't want you to see it, until it is too late!

BUT... If you can *control* that which you delight in, the other stuff will not be an issue. you will never commit sexual immorality if you are satisfied in the life you already have. Even if you aren't married... you still have enough going for you, that you if you delight in your life and delight in God's will for your life, you can live knowing that those things will come... if you can delight in what you do have, as God starts to add to it, you will be able to live patiently.

See, growing up in Christ means that we learn how to say “no” to our desires. We know how to not feed them physically, and we even learn how to not feed them mentally.

but it is so much easier to say no to what you aren't suppose to have NOW, if you are delighting in the season that you ARE IN, now.

It will never even be mentioned among us, or about you.

No... rather, people will see you, and they will see something delightful. Someone who LOVES their life... someone who knows that they are standing right in the center of the will of God.

Now... take that whole concept, and lets look at sexual immorality, briefly.

How does that fit? Remember, we are talking about a new way of life... a brand new community that reflects God... that imitates him. A body of people who delight in what we *do have*, and who don't look across the fence at the things that we *don't*.

So the Greek word Paul uses here is “*porneia*” - which is a very broad sexual term... it is not limited to adultery... it essentially is sexual relations in any context other than in a marriage, as God designed it to be.

Now, we are going to dive incredibly deep into this in two weeks, and I am very excited about it...

but there something very significant about marriage, that requires that we do the work of protecting *ourselves*, so that we reflect God the way that he needs to be reflected.

See, sex was designed to be something that you delight in, with your spouse... in a marriage. And the way bible describes a marriage between a man and a woman, it describes it as two very different people coming together, to form a oneness unlike anything else in our physical world.

It requires total commitment...

but it is even more than that!

it is actually an IMAGE... a mysterious image, it is a physical analogy of the relationship between Christ and his church.

And here is what is so significant about that, as it relates to what Paul says here... if you have *porneia* - sexual immorality... a sexual relationship apart from a marriage... you are getting the physical oneness that was designed to ONLY BE A PART of the reflection of Christ and the church... you are getting everything of another person physically, but you aren't committing your WHOLE LIFE to that person.

But imagine telling God that? Imagine saying, "I will take all of this from you... but I won't commit everything I am *to you*... I won't give you my *whole* self."

See, because marriage is the greatest reflection we get, the greatest image of the relationship that we the church are supposed to be to Christ, we have a responsibility to protect it...

our marriages should be like this... when someone is trying to understand the gospel, and the church, and all that it is supposed to be, and we are trying to explain that to someone, we should be able to point to marriage, and say: its like that!

but how quickly that image gets distorted when our physical relationships don't function the way they were designed to.

But most of us live that way with God anyway. We expect him to give us everything, all the benefits... without the commitment... but what does that lead to?

it leads to entitlement. To always thinking that we should have more than we have. To coveting.

We need to learn to delight in our lives right where they are. If we aren't married, we need to delight in singleness. If we are married, we need to delight in our spouses...

If you don't delight in your marriage, then why would you invest in your marriage? and if you don't invest in your marriage, it will fall apart. And if it falls apart, you will look for something else to take its place... and before long, you will have totally and completely destroyed the greatest reflection given to us on this earth of Christ and his church.

We are to be imitators of God. Our lives should point people to God.

Let there be no covetousness among us... let us not be people that delight in things that we don't have... and who talk about things that we don't have...

who let our mouths give way to crude jokes and filthiness, which only plant seeds, that harvest thoughts, that lead to actions that don't imitate God...

but instead let there be thanksgiving.

let there be delight, in the absolutely amazing life that God has designed for you... in the community that he gave you.

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now, verses 8-14:

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 *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 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.

Look at what it says (verse 10) - "try to discern" what is pleasing to the Lord.

Try.

This phrase is one Greek word (*dokimazō*), essentially meaning:

to “test everything.”

It was a word that was used to describe the process of when someone was trying to determine if a metal was authentic...

is this real gold?

is this actually a diamond?

And the best way to know that, of course, is the word of God. We get a pretty clear idea of what is pleasing to God by what we read in the Word of God, and beyond that, the Holy Spirit will help us to discern the areas of our lives that maybe don't always seem black and white.

we may cover that more next week... I just wanted to mention it...

but now, Look closely at this middle section:

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

See, when we think of exposing people with light...we think of us as shining a light on them..... EXPOSE!!!

But I want you to, for a moment, think of this a different way. Because this whole section is ultimately about one thing, and that thing is “imitating God.” and we imitate God by delighting in the things that HE GAVE US... by being confident in his grace... by watching our mouths, by guarding our hearts... by living in such a way that points to Him...

but yet here we are given this task, of exposing.

But, if we are to expose things *by light*, then we have to understand what light even is... because it is not a lightning, screaming down from the sky and striking the guilty... biblical light is an illumination of hope that we carry with us everywhere that we go. We read it this way in verse 9:

“the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true”

So, what if we were to take this verse, and as a community adopt a new plan for exposing the darkness in others... not by pointing it all out TO THEM... NOT BY showing them everything that is WRONG *with* them... but by *living* by all that is good, and all that is right, and all that is true.

and *that* light illuminates... it leaks over into everyone in the room... it begs the question: WHERE IS THAT LIGHT COMING FROM?

There is something so incredibly different about that person!

“That person is content in what they have!” —- “it doesn’t even seem like they have much, but you would think that they have it ALL!!!”

“This community delights in each other... This community lives differently...”

“the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true”

and what if instead of us trying to shine a bright light on someone else’s sinful lives, instead we lived a light that was so bright from our own life, that it leaked over into their life... it breached their life, if you will, in such a way that JUST BY THE WAY THAT WE LIVE DIFFERENTLY, they felt their sins being exposed.

Not because we are throwing stones... not because we are condemning. not because we are coming down hard on them... its not rebuke, its exposure by way of light.

It is exposure, by way of *delight*.

By way of all that is good, and right, and true, being the things that *ARE* mentioned among us... because they are everywhere anyone looks when they see our community.

And its so attractive, yet at the same time, so convicting. Because people will think: “nobody *actually* lives like that!”

and when they realize that its possible, they wonder why THEY AREN'T.

They wonder, “why am I never content?” “Why do I always think I need more?” “Why do I want what I do not have?” “Why do I say the things that I say?”

Do you see it? We can redeem the tenth commandment. And through Thanksgiving, turn it into a reward... and turn it into a *light*.

That is exposure by way of light.

Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

I love this so much. It is simple, but at the same time, it is everything... it is a quote of a couple of different verses in Isaiah, put together...

Isaiah says it this way: “wake yourself up!” (Isaiah 51:17)

and later he (Isaiah) says: (60:1) - shine... for you light has come... the glory of the Lord has risen UPON you...”

I think that it is just so beyond important that we remember, that our light has COME... we didn't just have it... we were given it...

we don't just turn it on... CHRIST SHINES IT ON US. and it fills us... and it illuminates *from* us... but it is ALL BECAUSE OF JESUS.

Think about the very first verse we read today...

it says: Therefore be *imitators* of God, as beloved children... imitate God!
then it says in verse 2:

And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

We must never forget that the only reason we can imitate God, is because Jesus actually gave us something to imitate.

He gave himself up for us... as a fragrant offering, so that he could shine a light down on our lives so bright that even us, in all of our messes, would be able to live the kind of lives that actually can point others to Jesus.

He did it all... and we can look at these verses, and look then line them up with the lives that maybe we have lived in the past, and if we let him, the devil will just fill us up with condemnation... but we have to remember that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

When you are In Christ... you are judged for what He did... not for what you did.

and in Him you and I are new creations... he will make us something new.

The bible says that in Christ, YOUR sins are washed white as snow... and that my friends, is something to be Thankful for. That is something to delight in.