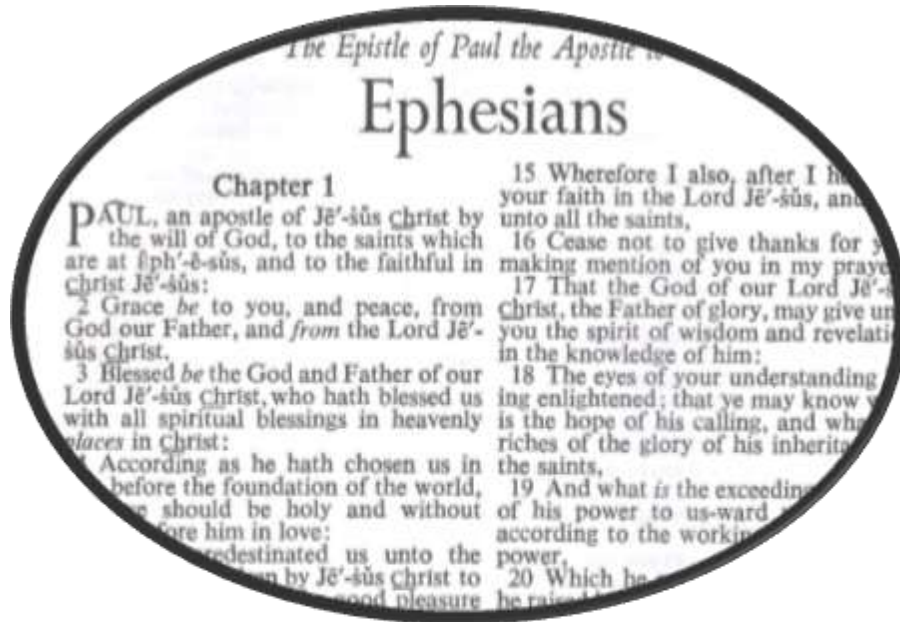


# EPHESIANS – WEEK 5

## LIGHT



F. Michael Slay

*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

## *Ephesians 4:20–5:14 – Light*

Paul says we are to put off the old self and put on the new self. Our internal battle with anger, bitterness, and our tongue never ends, and Paul details how to fight that battle.

Then we can be light to the world around us.

---

We're pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. To subscribe to the daily DEEP email, visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) and see the pop-up on the right hand side.

There, you will also discover many other resources, including many email newsletters, such as our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfigell*, and *the DEEP*.

We are a spiritual fellowship modeled after the Celtic revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

Thank you.

All the individual weekly study guides are available for download here:

<https://www.ailbe.org/resources/itemlist/category/91-deep-studies>

Ephesians 4:20–5:14 – Light  
Copyright 2020 F. Michael Slay  
The Fellowship of Ailbe  
[www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org)

*All scripture references are noted. ESV stands for the English Standard Version. © Copyright 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NKJV stands for the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NIV stands for The Holy Bible, New International Version®. © Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved. KJV stands for the King James Version.*

1 Ephesians 4:20–24 (NIV)

*That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ 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.*

This continues the thought in verses 17-19, where Paul told the Ephesians to *no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind*. Here he notes, “*That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.*”

But this time Paul adds a new dimension. Instead of instructing them to behave differently, he says they should be someone new – or at least *put on* someone new. That’s a different view of the process of sanctification.

The *old self* and the *new self* are both there – like the classic devil-self on one shoulder and angel-self on the other. Paul describes this conflict as putting on the new self and putting off the old one. Those seem like strange verbs for this, but the NKJV and ESV also translate the Greek words (apo-TI-thay-me and en-DOO-oh) the same way.

Paul is warning us that there’s a struggle going on inside of us and we need to recognize it. Ignoring this fight is choosing to lose it. Paul describes his own struggle in Romans 7:14-25. He ends the description with this stark portrait of his frustration.

*So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

*So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. — Romans 7:21–25 (NIV)*

Note well that this is in the present tense in the Greek. The fight never ends, even for an apostle.

---

Paul’s warning in today’s passage is usefully specific. We can learn a lot by considering the old self and recognizing how it is *being corrupted by its deceitful desires*. That’s in the present tense too. The old self is still being corrupted.

Paul isn’t telling us (or the Ephesians) to try to stop this corruption of the old self. That’s impossible.

It’s to put that old self off and put on the new self. Be a better person by being a different person.

2 Ephesians 4:25–32 (NIV)

*Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.*

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Here Paul gives us some practical advice about how to fight the battle between the old self and the new self.

First off, recognize the power of anger. Don't give it time to feed on itself and grow. *Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.*

If you're going to conquer your emotions with discipline, do it promptly. Most importantly, don't give your emotions a sleep cycle to run amok.

Secondly, control your tongue. Speech has a way of causing trouble. Even when words are right, they can be misunderstood. Thus a “safety margin” is appropriate here. When in doubt, stick a cork in it.

*Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent,  
and discerning if they hold their tongues. —Proverbs 17:28 (NIV)*

But Paul expands his application of a safety margin to forms of anger. *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.* Many of these are related to speech.

That's an interesting connection.

---

Anger has a way of loosening our tongues. It's a deadly combination. Who has never said something in anger that they regretted later?

So, the lessons of this passage lead to a delicately balanced strategy for dealing with anger. Don't be too quick to speak, yet don't wait too long to deal with your anger either.

Recognize it. Stick a cork in it. Pray about it. Address it. Overcome it.

3 Ephesians 5:1–2 (ESV)

*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.*

Notice what this says. When Christ *gave himself up for us*, it was *a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*.

Wait. What? Why was it a sacrifice to God? It says that Christ *gave himself up for us*.

This is an advanced point about why the plan of salvation is what it is. We like to think that the point of the plan of salvation is our salvation, but that’s just part of it. God’s glory is the real point, and our salvation – and how God achieves that – are the means to that end.

*When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, —John 17:1 (ESV)*

Jesus’s prayer in the garden of Gethsemane reveals the principal purpose of the cross. That’s what Paul’s referring to in today’s verse when he writes of *a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*.

So, we are to *walk in love*. That’s agape in Greek. We are to walk in charity. We are to walk in sacrifice.

That’s what Jesus did. Being imitators of God means walking as He did.

We should be incredibly grateful for how the plan of salvation works. It’s like we dodged a bullet. God didn’t have to save us; He could have glorified Himself some other way.

But we got lucky. God invented a plan for glorifying Himself where we make out like bandits.

Unfortunately, modern Christians tend to miss this point. We seem to take our salvation for granted – as if it isn’t ironic.

So, like everything else in America, there’s a distinct lack of drama. Modern American lives aren’t all that exciting; we’re almost never in danger (especially for our faith). Thus, the plan of salvation isn’t seen as exciting either.

Is it any wonder that our faith is as boring as our lives? By solving so many of the challenges of life, modern technology has made us complacent. Life is relatively safe. That’s good, but that safety allows us to let our guard down. We don’t need to be alert all the time to survive.

So, we are less alert. This has softened our perception of everything, including God. Our faith isn’t so much weak as it’s drowsy. It’s there, but it doesn’t command our attention. Nowadays nothing commands our attention. That’s why everything is so hyped. We’re screamed at constantly. Buy now!

Obviously, the answer isn’t to hype Christianity. That’d make it as phony as everything else. Taking the Lordship of Jesus seriously has to come from deep within. That’s the purview of the Holy Spirit.

4 Ephesians 5:3–7 (NIV)

*But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.*

This lesson is the practical side of being imitators of God. Paul is, yet again, imposing a safety margin on our righteousness.

This is especially applicable to sex. Of all the sins, that one seems to have the most power to make us stupid. It's not enough that we avoid sexual immorality. *There must not be even a hint of it.*

In modern terms, sexual sin is especially dangerous because it literally involves chemistry. In an amazing chain of events, an image falling on the retinas of my eyes can lead to chemicals being released into my bloodstream. Those chemicals can make me stupid. As a result, I can do stupid things with enormous consequences, for myself and for God's glory.

Thus, it's best to prevent this process for even getting started. That means not even seeing those images. That's a long way from the actual sinful acts, yet it's the surest way to prevent them.

*"Not even a hint,"* Paul says.

There's another advanced lesson in this passage. Paul says that an *immoral, impure or greedy person* is actually *an idolater*. Think about that for a moment. Paul is saying that idolatry lies at the root of people's immorality, impurity and greediness. How's that?

The things they chase after may not be little statues, but they're still things.

They're worshipping things.

---

Both of these lessons should inspire some serious introspection. Are they just clever concepts you should understand, or are they rules for living that you should assess yourself on? Should you even get someone else to assess you?

Practicing Christianity is more important than studying theology. When Jesus said, "Follow me," He wasn't talking about doctrine.

Are you overconfident about your ability to avoid sin? Do you use a safety margin, or do you think you're not at risk? Also, do you see idolatry in your heart when you're tempted?

Assess your priorities. What do you really care about?

5 Ephesians 5:8–14a (NKJV)

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

One of the most profound aspects of the born-again experience is the retroactive loss of privacy. Nothing is done in secret, and nothing ever was done in secret. It's the ultimate eye-opener.

Paul describes this as light. Light is shined on your life. We are *children of light*.

And we are to be light to everyone around us too. *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.* Everyone needs their eyes opened.

This gets tricky because exposing something means making it public. The whole point of the darkness is keeping things hidden. *But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.*

People aren't going to be happy about having their sin called out. That makes doing this risky. It's how John the Baptist got himself arrested.

*For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." —Matthew 14:3–4 (NKJV)*

Paul is telling us to take risks, and he doesn't seem to care about the risk. There's no specific advice in this passage about how to do this safely or tactfully.

Paul wants us to do the right thing regardless of the cost.

---

However, Paul does say one thing that might be application advice. *For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.* Can this be reconciled with Matthew 14:3–4?

Yes, but not because of John's tactful (or not) choice of words. John wasn't speaking of secret things; Herod's relationship with Herodias was public. He was simply shedding light on the situation.

But even that wasn't safe. So, is there any way to expose sin to light safely? Or, forgetting safety, is there a way that is best, or right?

Yes; we have one, directly from the Lord Himself. Approach someone privately before going public.

*"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." —Matthew 18:15 (NKJV)*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. Are you frustrated with your old self?
  
2. Which is harder to control? Your anger or your tongue?
  
3. Do we hype Christianity?
  
4. Can you see the idolatry roots for some of the things you do?
  
5. Have you ever called someone out for their sin?

*Items for prayer:*