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Main Idea: We are called to stay away from the sins of the world that are dark and foreboding; we are called to keep our focus in the Light of our Lord. In this way, we can be the living examples of what Christ does for us. If we seek what is dark when we are saved, we forsake so much. Why do this to ourselves and others? Remember, we are His children, so let's seek how to please Him and live worthy lives instead of playing in darkness. We can shine light so people will realize that sin is foolish and shameful. We can be used to wake people up from their evil so they can have a transformed and meaningful lives, too. Be careful how we live and make sure it is Christ-like, not worldly--not unwise and foolish. Christ is the One who is to stimulate our hearts and minds, not the substances of worldliness. We can be people who worship Christ, who are filled with the Holy Spirit and are grateful. We can encourage and inspire others to be their best for His glory.

Contexts and Background:

Here are two themes that Paul draws from. One comes from the Jewish commentary texts that use the contrast of darkness and light to depict the distinction of good and evil. Greek Mystery Cults used nighttime initiations with sexual activities. The Romans believed that Christianity was like the Mystery Cults, giving more reason for Paul to make the distinction.

Many new Christians thought the Gospel message was too simple, so they mixed in the popular philosophical trends of the day. Then, those who also belonged to the Mystery Cults sought special favor and leadership in this church. They were seeking something extra and more, when God had already provided what they needed in salvation and hope (Col. 1:15-16; 2:9).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Darkness.* This refers to sin and the ways of the world that are meaningless and hopeless. Christ is the Perfection; He has the power and authority to be the Light and shatter the darkness on our behalf (Isa. 29:15; 47:10; 2 Cor. 3:15; 4:4-6; 6:14; Eph. 5:8-14; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:9-14; 1 Thess. 5:5).
- *Light in the Lord.* This means God's Divine Truth, Love, and Holiness. This is a contrast between light--goodness and God-honoring--and the conflict with darkness and evil, as those who are wicked, and who fight against God. This is a synonym of God's Kingdom; the ones with the light participate in the Kingdom and Heaven (Psalm 27:1; 36:9; 105, 119; 130; Isa. 9:2; 42:6; 49:6; 58:8-10; 59:9; 60:1-3; Matt. 5:14; 6:23; John 8:12; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:8-14; Col. 1:9-14; 1 John 1:5; 1 Tim. 6:16; James 1:17; 1 John 2:9-10; Rev. 21:23; 22:5).
- *Children of light.* This means to know who we are in Christ. Our redemption is secured so we should live as such for Christ not for fear of wrath, but gratitude. We become "joint heirs" (Num. 26:52; 33:51-54; Josh. 14: 1-2; Acts 3:25; Rom. 8:17; Gal. 3:29; Titus 3:7; Heb. 6:17; 11:9; 1 Pet. 3:7) of His promises. He is the Light that shines on our lives, on our path. The world is the darkness, we avoid the evil, while we bear the Light by our response (Psalm 27:1; Isa. 9:2; 42:6; 49:6; 58:8-10; 60:1; Matt. 5:14; John 8:12; 9:5; Col. 1:13).
- *Goodness / fruit of the Spirit/light.* This is the engagement of love, which displays us as Christ's masterpiece and showcases God's goodness and grace. This displays integrity, honesty, and compassion to others and allows us to do the right thing-- doing the right thing even when it does not feel like we should. Goodness is the model for people to repent and accept Christ (Amos 5:15; Prov. 25:22; Matthew 7:12; 19:16; Luke 6:27, 35; Rom. 12:17; II Cor. 5:20; Eph. 5:8-9; I Pet. 3:11; II Pet. 1:3-8).

- *Pleases the Lord.* This is knowing Christ and applying the Word. This means for us to be good stewards, how we live, serve, and do all that we do in life for the honor and glory of our Lord and Savior (Psalm 34:1-9; 69:30; 96:1-9; Rev. 14:7; Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; 1 Pet. 4:11; Jude 24-25)!
- *Shameful.* This refers to the cults, out of control wickedness, which would dishonor anyone. This is the practice of sin, missing what Christ has for us, while hurting ourselves and others. It is caused by not being in the right relationship with God, then not being in the right relationship with those around you. It becomes more serious, something we are not to just glance over thinking, "I am OK". Sin is something we need to do all we can to purge it from our life. We should be ashamed to associate with it. Do not give into sin, especially sexual immorality. We have no excuse (Lev. 18:22; 21:13; Psalm 19:1; Rom. 1:18-32; Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:1-7)!
- *Everything/reproved exposed.* This is to convict one of sin so they change. The barrier that sin should be becomes the ignition for continuing in sin like an out of control fire. God can use us to convict, and one day all will know.
- *Wake up, sleeper/he saith.* Perhaps Paul quotes from a commentary of Isaiah 60:1 or an early church song, a call to rise up and know Christ (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; 1 Cor. 14:37).
- *Careful, then, how you live/circumspectly.* This means to be exact and diligent. Sin and the desires of our lust can and will consume us, taking us far away from God and His goodness. This empty pursuit of fulfillment will end up bringing us nothing but dysfunction, the very thing we are trying to avoid. Sin will dig at us, causing our thinking to be skewed, and our decisions flawed (Eph. 4:1, 17).
- *Unwise, but as wise.* This means that we should not be mindless, or reckless and without reason; rather, we should seek His Word and be mindful of Him, understanding God's precepts.
- *Every opportunity/redeeming the time.* This means to 'buy in the market,' or 'purchase,' meaning being prudent, using the time we have on earth wisely, our best for God's glory (Psalm 90:12; Jer. 29:23; Dan. 2:8; Amos 5:13; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Col. 4:5).
- *Foolish.* It is always foolish to fight against God, or seeking to return to the old ways; how foolish and ineffective that would be. Now, we have more insights to Him, His ministry, and the heavenly sanctuary (Psalm 48:4; Heb. 8:1-13).
- *Lord's will is.* Living a surrendered, redeemed life is about seeking, placing first, God's will, and seeking to glorify Him (Matt. 6:33).
- *Drunk.* Taking too much wine or fermented drink so one loses control of their mind and or body. Mystics and cultists believed drunkenness loosens the mind for greater spirituality; it does the opposite. Being drunk in biblical times was a huge insult to the Jews and pious Greeks. Is drinking wine wrong? Drinking is not wrong; drunkenness is. The Bible is against the misuse of wine and drunkenness (Gen. 9; 19:32; 1 Sam. 1:24; 2 Sam 16:1; 2 Kings 18:32; Prov. 4:17; 20:1; 23:20; 1 Tim. 3:8). I am not condoning the consumption of alcohol, but remember both Calvin and Luther were heavy drinkers. Moreover, the Bible does not condemn its use. In fact, it promotes it. Back then, it was needed to sterilize the water they drank so people would not get dysentery (Gen.14: 18; Ex. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Ruth 2:14; Psalm 104:15; Prov. 3:10; 23:20-35; Luke 10:34; John 2:3; 1 Tim 5:23). John 2:1-12).
- *Debauchery.* This means an 'excess abandoned life,' unrestrained indulgence, seeking sinful, physical gratification, or giving into one's desires. This leads to being merciless and unscrupulous in one's dealings with others! When we fight against one another, especially in the church, it is hurtful and even pathetic in God's eyes (Gen. 4:8; Duet. 25:17-19; Joshua 7; Matt. 21: 1-17; Luke 9:54; Rom. 13:13; 2 Cor. 12:21; Eph. 4:19; 1 Pet. 4:1-11).

- *Filled with the Spirit.* This is the contrast to sin. This basically means having great joy from our commitment to God (Nehemiah 8:10). It also means we are to seek His power with delight, for the overcoming of our sins, for the courage to witness, and for the job of ministry, even to people we do not like. This joy means *radiant joy*, which will overflow from us to the others around us! This Joy becomes sealed in us as we mature in the faith and as we are filled with His Word (John 14:16-26; 16:12-15; 17:17; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; Col. 3:15-16).
- *Psalms.* Possibly referring to the "Psalter." The reciting of the Psalms, blessings and worshipful knowledge of our Lord, were also sung with or without music in the local churches and homes. When we are filled with God's Word, we will have gratitude that will be manifested in our nature, temperament, and attitude. We will want to sing the song that He has planted in our hearts--the songs from His Word, the Bible (Luke 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33; 1 Cor. 14:26). Col. 3:15-17).
- *Hymns/songs.* This means the praise and celebration of our Lord in unity with willing, loving hearts. In context, this also means that significant doctrines and truths are articulated in hymns written by authentic Christians from the beliefs in Scripture. Real worship and music are never a show; rather, they are responses of our love giving praise. We as a congregation are the performers, and Christ is the audience. Real, authentic worship is to be inspired by who Christ is and what He is doing in us. It is not about form or function or type; it is about our hearts showing our love to Him (Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Eph. 5:19; Heb. 2:12).
- *Songs from the Spirit.* An application from being in Christ and the flow of the Holy Spirit can inspire one to music and or a content heart. It is a part of our worship, our praise to Christ as Lord (1 Chron. 25:1-6; 1 Cor. 14:15; Col. 3:16).
- *Hearts.* This refers to the inner will where one's desires and conflicts reside. Peace in our hearts makes peace with others and peace in the church that influences the world. Gratitude promotes peace and secures a content heart, whereas sin and turmoil become cancerous and adversely affect others around us (Psalm 32; 51).
- *Music from your heart/making melody.* A 'joyful' noise to God with psalms. The context is Joy, which we gain *joy* and it will become sealed in us as we mature in the faith and are filled with His Word. It is the power to enjoy Him in worship and as a lifestyle that affects all aspects of our lives and the lives of others around us (Psalm 95:2).
- *Thanks to God/give thanks/thank God.* This means *being grateful*: "exordia." It was the custom to give thanks to the gods in Greek culture. Paul switches the emphasis to the One we should honor. This is not just to be a conversational expression, but rather the overture of this Epistle. Having an attitude of gratitude is essential to our faith and practice, no matter what we have been through or have lost. (Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:14; Eph. 1:6; Philp. 1:3-4; Col. 1:12; 2:7; 3:15-17; 4:2).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

We should be clear on this: a healthy Christian is one who has joy in their hearts, who puts aside the malicious traits of an evil sinful nature, and embraces others in love. Our need is to bow to His Lordship for our betterment and growth! This will keep us going on the right path through that dark, foreboding jungle of the pandemonium of life! What comes out of love is the release of our feelings of desire, pride, betrayal and hurt.

Being thankful also helps us to see joy and hope, and to forgive and live and have joy by which we display God's goodness. Without gratitude, we are ungrateful people--ingrates; this is an insult to God. As a result, we will live a self-inflicted, miserable, hopeless life, no matter what we have or could have; God's goodness that is to be shown through us is veiled by our very own contempt.

Church Leadership Tip: Our task in the church is to proclaim Christ as Lord, His character, righteousness, peace, and joy, all by the Holy Spirit. We are also to stand against sin, as positive examples and catalysts for transformational lives! This will effectively be the catalyst to build quality, lasting, and effective relationships. We are to showcase our personal identification and relationship to our Lord and Savior!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Do you have joy in your heart? How so? Why not?
2. What does it mean to be a mature Christian? What are you willing to do about it?
3. How do you know what is the right way, that is best and pleases the Lord?
4. What does it mean to have music from your heart? Do you have this? If not what is in the way?
5. Do you know who we are in Christ, your redemption is secured? So, how do we live?
6. What are some popular philosophical trends of the day some church leaders like to embrace?
7. What needs to take place for you to be totally focused on our Lord?
8. What can your church do to help your attitude to be more Christ-centered?
9. Will you commit your outlook on life to the Lord, so your circumstances will no longer take the lead, instead, enable you to allow Christ to take the lead?
10. Do you realize the Holy Spirit gives you the power to overcome regardless of what you have been through in life? (But, for Him to work, you have to let go of bitterness and fear and then embrace Christ as Lord over all, including our hurts and fears!)
11. How can your church help others to be careful how we live and make sure it is Christ like not worldly like, wise and not foolish, so we can make the most out of life?
12. What can you do to make a commitment to have a Christian mindset away from our selfish nature and or the world over to His character?