

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

EPHESIANS LESSON 3 (Chapter 5)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

Welcome to The Gospel of Christ. This is the third lesson in our study of the Book of Ephesians. In this lesson we are going to be discussing “partakers of evil.” Who is a partaker of evil? What does it mean to partake of evil? Are we partaking of evil when we carry out certain acts? These are some of the questions that we will be answering. We will be looking at this matter from several scriptural standpoints to ensure that we are not “partakers of evil.”

In Ephesians 5:7 Paul wrote, “Therefore do not be partakers with them.” Paul had been condemning many of the Gentiles for the way that they had acted by doing whatever they felt like doing and living in sin. Paul said that Christians are not to be “partakers with them” (that is, we are not to be partakers of, or have fellowship with, evil in any way).

First we need to understand that the Bible always condemns fellowshiping evil. In Ephesians 5:11 Paul went on to say, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” We are not to have fellowship with evil. We will be condemned for fellowshiping or condoning evil in any way. Look at what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:14 —“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” What we see here is that Paul is making a comparison by showing that good cannot fellowship evil. Light cannot have fellowship with darkness. James 4:4 says, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” We cannot be a friend of the world, fellowship the world, and condone the sinful acts of the world—and then turn around and say, “I’m following what God wants me to do; I’m a faithful Christian.” The Bible says that it doesn’t work like that. We cannot have both. In Matthew 6:24 we are told that we cannot have two masters. We need to understand the importance of not fellowshiping and making friends with the world. We must be true friends of God. In order to do that, John 15:14 says that we must follow His commandments and do exactly what He says.

In Deuteronomy 7:2-4 we see a command under the Old Law given to the Jews.

“When the Lord your God delivers them [pagan nations] over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.”

It is interesting that God’s people were “not to show mercy to them.” Sometimes people who are in sin have a good way of getting people to feel sorry for them. If people fall into sin and are doing something wrong, then yes, we need to feel sorry for them. But we also need to rebuke them and bring them back to Christianity. But that is not what is under discussion here. It is talking about not showing mercy to a person who tries to justify his

sin by getting you to feel sorry for him. We should not say, "I know this person has done something wrong, but maybe he does not need to repent. Maybe he can continue as he is." The Bible says that we are not to do that. Deuteronomy 7:5 summarizes what God was saying: "But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire." Today, of course, we are living in the Christian Age. Thus, this does not mean that today we are to go "burn down" all the false religions. Rather, we are to evangelize and convert people. But the principle found under the Old Law is still in effect for us today. Why did God tell His people to do these things? It was because He did not want evil people mixing with His people. He wanted His people to stay far away from the influence of those in the world. God's people were not to participate in evil activities, and were not to associate with sinful people. In John 3:19-21 we see Jesus saying,

"This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

People sometimes come to this passage and say, "Wait a minute. Jesus said that He was the condemnation, that He was the light, and that men hate the light and love the darkness. We thought that Jesus came to seek and save the lost." He did. That was His mission. But Jesus described Himself as light. So many people in the world today do not want to be revealed by the light. They want to continue in sin. Jesus came to seek and save those who are lost. But in order to be saved, we must be obedient. We must **want** to be saved. When does a thief usually come? Does he usually come during the middle of the day when the mailman will be out, and when lots of people will be out walking around so that they can see him breaking into your house? Of course not. When does a thief come? He usually comes when it is night. Perhaps he knows that no one will be home. In the darkness it is hard for anyone to see him. It is hard to be exposed in the darkness. That is how men are when it comes to their evil deeds. We are to be the light, just as Jesus is the light. We are not to have fellowship with sin. We are not to approve of sin. Instead, we are to be the light that exposes the sin. Psalm 94:20 says, "Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with You?" The answer is, "Absolutely not!" The Bible condemns fellowshiping any type of evil, or partaking of any type of evil.

The next question we need to ask ourselves is, "What does it mean to fellowship evil?" What does it mean to be a partaker of evil? We may have thought that we weren't doing such things, but then come to realize that we have been doing something that we should not have been doing. What does it mean to be a partaker of evil? We see in the Scriptures that when we begin to seek counsel, and keep close company with those who are evil, that is being a partaker of evil. In Psalm 1:1-2 we read,

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night."

Blessed is the man who does what? Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. Where should we be going to find sound advice about how to live our lives? Should we be going to people whom we know will simply tell us what we want to hear? Will we go to those who are ungodly because we know that we should not be doing the things we are doing, but instead of turning to good counsel such as is found in the Word of God, we turn to those who are ungodly and ask, "There's nothing wrong with what I'm doing, is there?" Of course those who are ungodly will tell us that we are fine. That is why

the Bible says, “Blessed is the man who walks **not** in the counsel of the ungodly.” Why should we not walk in the counsel of the ungodly? It is because we should not “stand in the path of sinners.” Maybe we are walking with the ungodly. And all of a sudden we decide to stop walking and just stand. You no longer are walking; you are standing among the sinners. Then we read about the person who “sits in the seat of the scornful.” It is usually a slow pattern. Perhaps it begins with just talking to someone to get some advice that you know you should not be getting. But you start to like what you hear—which means that you are partaking of evil. The Bible condemns that because we are told that our delight should not be with the wisdom of the world, but in the law of the Lord. This stresses the importance of our meditating on God’s Word. We must constantly study God’s Word. We should not “just read” the Bible (although reading is important). But we need to meditate on the Word of God day and night. In Psalm 26:1-5 David wrote,

“Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart. For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth. I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites. I have hated the assembly of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked.”

This is some very strong, aggressive language that David has used. He understood the condemnation of partaking of evil, of keeping company with evil, of condoning evil, of taking counsel from those who are evil, and how dangerous it is when a person begins to do that. In 1 Corinthians 15:33 Paul gave a command that is true not just for those who are young, but for those of all ages. We oftentimes like to use this verse when we are talking to our children or those who are younger. But this is verse that applies to everyone. Paul wrote, “Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.” Notice how Paul starts the verse: “Do not be deceived.” Why? A lot of people say, “I’m going to hang around with these folks because they are my close friends. I probably hang around the more than I should, and more than I do with my Christian friends. But it’s OK. Maybe I’ll be a good influence on them. Maybe I’ll rub off on them.” Paul said, “Do not be deceived.” We must not think that will happen. If we constantly put ourselves around bad people, they will rub off on us and have a terrible influence on us. In 1 Peter 4:3-4 we are told,

“We have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”

I have talked with many of my friends who used to be terrible, immoral people. They were not following the Bible. They were engaged in a lot of the sins that Peter condemned. They said that when they quit doing those things, the people who composed that group made fun of them. They did not understand, and asked, “Why would you want to change and start living a ‘Christian life’ when you can go out and get drunk every night, have fun parties, and involve yourself in sexual relations? Why would you want to go have such a boring life in the Christian world?” They did not understand. Why? It is because they have yet to see the counsel that is found in God’s Word. The Bible tells us that we should not think it is strange when such people do things like these. Perhaps you have been involved in some acts in which you know you should not have been involved. Yet, instead of changing like you should, you want to keep on doing what you’ve been doing. The Bible says, “Do not do that! Change! And when you do change, do not think it strange if evil people start to say things about you because that is the way it will be. But we cannot continue to live that kind of lifestyle. We cannot put ourselves around, among, and in evil company.

Another way that we can be in sin is by approving of sin in any form. In 2 John 9-11 we read,

“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”

The Bible says that if someone is not teaching the whole counsel of God, and is not teaching and following the doctrine of Christ, then we must not condone such. We cannot even invite such a person into our houses and act as if that person is OK and can live any way he wants. We cannot approve of people’s sin in any way. In Romans 1:32 we see a long list of sins—in fact, one of the longest list of sins in the New Testament. Verse 32 speaks of those “who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” This means that not only are people in the world sinning (and lost) when they commit these sins, but so are those who approve of such activities. I’ve heard many people say that the people who are committing sins are not necessarily the problem. They are. But the bigger problem is those people who know that such things are wrong, but who are not doing anything about it. Only then can evil win. We cannot approve of or condone sin in any way.

Now let’s look at what it means to condone and approve of sin. In Acts 7 we find Saul (who later would become the apostle Paul) consenting to the death of Stephen. In Acts 22:20 when Paul was on trial, he looked back to his former life and said, “And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.” Even though Saul did not necessarily throw a stone, he still held the coats of those who did—thereby consenting and approving of Stephen’s death. But he should not have done that. In Proverbs 1:10 we read, “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.” In Psalm 50:17-19 we read,

“Seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you? When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit.”

What happens when we begin condoning evil is that sooner or later, we will begin to participate in it in some form or fashion. We are being lukewarm instead of being consistent. We “give our mouths to evil, and our tongues frame deceit.” We cannot partake of such things in any way. In Deuteronomy 13:6-10 we see some more Old Testament principles.

“If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, of the gods of the people which are all around you, near to you or far off from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth, you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him; but you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. And you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

This is very strong language. Under the Old Law, if someone tried to entice another person to sin, the innocent person was not to pity the sinner by saying, “He has had a rough life. I know he’s living in sin, but he’s had such a rough life that I’m not sure if he should be held accountable. He’s trying. And yes, he’s trying to pull me away, but he’s really a nice guy.” You hear a lot of that today. People try to give excuses, and their eyes are pitying others. The Bible says that we are not to do that. We must hold fast to the commands

that God has given us. Not only must we not follow a sinner, but we also cannot conceal what the sinner is doing. We must let the sin be known (and in the Old Testament the sinner was to be killed). This is not the law given for Christians today, of course. But the principle is the same regarding how God views such things. If anyone tries to convince us to sin, not only can we not engage in that sin, but we also cannot consent to what they are doing. We cannot condone their acts. This happens so often in the Lord's church and, in fact, in all religions. People give in and say, "Well, I'm not participating in that sin." But those people are still wrong because they are allowing and condoning the sin of someone else. We must not do that. In Genesis 37:20-22,29 we see that Reuben wanted to help his brother Joseph. But he still was guilty because he consented to what his brothers were doing. We see in Exodus 32:1-6 that we cannot consent to false worship. If you are in a congregation that brings into worship a mechanical instrument of worship (which is unauthorized in New Testament worship, and is condemned in passages such as Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16-17), or if you are in a congregation that uses hand clapping or other false ideas in worship (like children's church), then you need to take a stand against such things. I've had someone tell me that a woman preacher began preaching for a congregation. This person said, "I know that 1 Timothy 2:11-14 condemns that, but I'm going to continue attending that congregation even though I don't like what's happening." We cannot do that. We are consenting to false worship if we do. John 4:24 says that we must worship God "in spirit and in truth." We cannot consent to or condone sin in any way.

What does it mean to be "in the world, but not of the world"? Aren't we still to live in the world? Yes, we do live in the world. But we must remember (if we want to be faithful children of God) that this world is not our home. In Philippians 3:20 we read, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Yes, we do live in the world, but this world is not our home. We are not to be "of" this world. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." In John 17:16-17 we read, "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." If we are Christians, and if we are trying to live faithfully, then we cannot be like the people in the world. We must be different.

Someone might say, "I'm not that much different from the people in the world." Then perhaps that person is not a faithful Christian, and is not living the way he should. In fact, such a person is **not** living correctly if he is no different than the people of the world. In John 15:19 we read, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Matthew 10:22 says, "You will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved." How sad it is to hear people say at a funeral, "This person never had an enemy." That is not a compliment. If the person never had an enemy, then he did not live a faithful Christian life. If he had, then according to the Bible, he would have had enemies because he was being a light, just as Christ was. Christ condemned the world because He was the light. Matthew 5:16 says that we, too, must be the same kind of light.

In 2 Corinthians 6:17 we are told, "Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate,' says the Lord. 'Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.'" We must be separate from those people in the world. Even under the Old Law, there always was a distinction between God's faithful people and the people of the world. We see this in Exodus 8:23. Today that same distinction must exist between Christians and those in the world. Yes, we still have to work, live, and go to the store. But we need to ask ourselves some questions so that we can be sure that what we are doing is pleasing to God when it comes to our work and the entertainment we enjoy. When it comes to work, if we are doing any-

thing that can cause us to sin or condone a sin, that is something in which we do not need to be involved. For example, consider the work of a bartender. If we are doing something in our job that is contrary to the Word of God, we do not need to be doing that. In Isaiah 5:22-23 we read, "Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away justice from the righteous man!" If we had a job that required us to forsake the assembly (Heb. 10:25), promote sin, or be a crooked salesman, then we need to get out of such a job. If our jobs are making us bad spouses or parents (as Ephesians 5 and 6 condemn), then we need to get out of those jobs so that we can seek first the kingdom of God (Mt. 6:33). In our daily living, are we going to stores that can give us a bad reputation? Are we shopping at stores that mainly sell liquor? If so, then we should try to find another store where we would not look like we were partaking in that. Even if we are not, we do not need to set that kind of an example. We need to be the light in the world. Or what about entertainment? Entertainment is authorized at times (Eccl. 3:1-7; Mk. 6:31). Entertainment of itself is not sinful. But if it includes drinking parties or concerts at which people are drunk or immodest, and at which the singers are cursing, those are things in which we should not participate. What about the movies we watch? In 2 Peter 2:7-9 we are told that Lot was tormented by the things that he saw and heard. Unfortunately, we sometimes are entertained by sinful actions—when Lot was tormented by them! We need to understand that entertainment is an option. When it comes to the point that there is hardly any type of entertainment in which we can participate without sinning, then we need to leave that type of entertainment behind because we are not commanded to be entertained. Entertainment is an option. If we choose to exercise that option, we need to be sure that our actions are pleasing to God and do not violate any scriptural principles. In 2 Corinthians 1:12 we find a verse that presents a wonderful attitude for all Christians to possess. Paul wrote, "Our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you." This should be our attitude. We should be able to say, "This action is not sinful of itself, but I realize that if some people saw me participating in it, they might think that I'm doing something wrong, so I won't do this because I want to be as sincere and godly as possible."

However, a person first needs to be sure that he is a Christian, and that he has been baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins. Then and only then can a person start to be a faithful Christian and walk in the light. If you have yet to obey the truth, we pray today that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR EPHESIANS LESSON 3 (CHAPTER 5)

1. When Paul said in Ephesians 5:7, "Do not be partakers with them," what point was he making?
2. How does Ephesians 5:11 fit with what Paul was saying in Ephesians 5:7?
3. What did Paul say in 2 Corinthians 6:14?
4. According to Matthew 6:24, what can faithful Christians **not** do?
5. What did Jesus say in John 15:14?
6. What principle is contained in Deuteronomy 7:2-4 that applies to us today?
7. According to Jesus' comments in John 3:19, what do men generally love?
8. According to Jesus' comments in John 3:19, what do men generally hate?
9. What rhetorical question did the psalmist ask in Psalm 94:20, and what was the obvious answer?
10. According to Psalm 1:1-2, who is "blessed"?
11. According to Psalm 26:1, in what should we walk?
12. According to Psalm 26:5, what should we hate?
13. According to Psalm 26:5, with whom should we not sit?
14. What command did the apostle Paul give in 1 Corinthians 15:33?
15. In 1 Peter 4:3-4, what kinds of things are discussed in which Christians should not participate?
16. According to 2 John 9-11, what kind of reaction should a faithful Christian have to a person who refuses to adhere faithfully to the doctrine of Christ?
17. What is the general spiritual principle being set forth in Psalm 50:17-19?
18. What is the general spiritual principle being set forth in Deuteronomy 13:6-10?
19. What spiritual principle is contained in Philippians 3:20 that can help Christians remain faithful and avoid sin on a daily basis?
20. In John 15:19, what did Jesus tell His disciples?
21. In Matthew 10:22, what did Jesus tell His disciples?
22. How does 2 Corinthians 1:12 admonish Christians to conduct themselves?