

**“Living to Maximum Potential”
Ephesians 5:8-10**

Introduction:

1. Object lesson: diluted Pepsi and undiluted Pepsi. (Have three glasses, of which two are half filled with water. Pour a couple of drops of Pepsi into one glass with water, and about a 50-50 mixture in the other. Pour remaining Pepsi into the third glass. Have taste testers comment about how they like the Pepsi.)
2. In the same way, we often dilute Christianity, so that it seems tasteless to those outside the faith and lacking punch to ourselves. The Spirit of God does not want us to live that way. He wants us to reach our maximum potential for the glory of God and the good of others.

Exposition:

I. In order to live to maximum potential, we need a clear concept of what God has done for us by his grace. 5:8

Comment: The Spirit of the Lord must think it important for us to have the contrast between what we were and what we now are firmly in mind. This is the fourth time we find such a contrast in this letter!

| Passage | Once | Now |
|---------|------------|----------|
| 2:1-10 | Dead | Alive |
| 2:11-22 | Foreigners | Citizens |
| 4:17-24 | Old Self | New Self |
| 5:8-10 | Darkness | Light |

A. We must never forget what we were—darkness.

1. Observe carefully exactly what the text says. It does not say that we were in darkness although that is a Biblical truth (Jn 8:12; Rm 2:19; 1 Th 5:4; 1 Jn 1:6; 2:9). Here it says that we were darkness. To be “darkness” is to be in a condition of moral evil, of bondage to Satan, and of blindness to the glory of Christ in the gospel (Jn 3:19; Ac 26:18; 2 Cor 4:4-6).

2. This truth is essential for proper evangelism. Unless we understand the true condition of those apart from Christ, we may be tempted to seek quick and easy methods. But the unsaved need a change of heart. They need to be born again by the Spirit.

B. We must always remember what we are—light.

1. In the same way, the text says more than that we walk in the light, though that is true (1 Jn 1:7). The Spirit tells us that we are “light in the Lord”. (Everything always depends on our union with Christ!)

2. Since we are light, we are able to function as lights. For example, Jesus says that we are “the light of the world” (Mt 5:14).

Apply: If we are to reach our families and friends for Christ, they must be seeing God’s light shining out from us. Otherwise, we will seem dim or diffused, or, as in our earlier illustration, diluted.

II. In order to live to maximum potential, we need to walk in the light. 5:9

A. Again we see the NT way of teaching sanctification or Christian growth. We are told, “This is what you are. Now live accordingly. Make your condition correspond and conform to your position.”

1. Needless to say, this simple truth lacks the glitz and glamour of popular religious views that view sanctification as some kind of **transforming experience**. “Just claim this experience by faith and you’ll be lifted from defeat level to victory level.” All such views fly in the face of the teaching of the New Testament Scriptures. If they were true, you would never read command after command to obey the Lord and to strive to please him. You would only find exhortations to have the specified experience. Since transforming experience teaching is not found in the Bible, in pastoral and counseling experience pastors and counselors find that it doesn’t work! People have the supposed experience and still have their problems—which they should never have if their views were true. However, God wants us to realize our **personal responsibility**. Therefore, we see **commands** like this one: “walk as children of light”.

Clarification: Someone schooled in one of these transforming experience views might object that this is “sanctification by works”. To that charge I reply...

- Only those who are in Christ can walk in the light
- You can only walk in the light as you draw strength from Christ by faith
- This strength comes through the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit

2. Since God is light (1 Jn 1:5), we have the responsibility of showing his character, in other words, to walk as **children** of light. This makes worship (exalting God) a way of life.

B. When we walk as children of light, specific character traits will be evident.

1. Goodness—actions that help or benefit others. Flowing out of attitudes of mercy and compassion, goodness seeks to make others better.

2. Righteousness—actions that reflect God’s holiness (behavior that he says is right behavior).

3. Truth—actions that conform to what God says is true about himself, us and the world he has made. Truth stands against unreality, hypocrisy and delusive fantasies and stands for integrity and reliability.

Apply: Do you have these maximum potential traits in yourself? Are they part of your lifestyle? If we desire to attract people to Christ, we must be people with these traits.

III. In order to live to maximum potential, we need to find out what pleases the Lord. 5:10

A. In every life situation, we must consider the “vertical dimension”. How can I please the Lord in these circumstances?

1. True Christianity always thinks about the Lord and what pleases him. We know that he is the ultimate good and what is best in all cases is to bring him pleasure.

2. The failure to have God’s pleasure in our thoughts perverts Christianity into a religion of moralism and legalism. There is no joy in obeying a law; there is maximum joy in obeying the God who loves joy and peace and who wants you to experience what he loves!

B. We can find out or “put to the test” what pleases the Lord from his revelation of what pleases him in the Scriptures. If God finds pleasure in certain things, then we are wise to share in his pleasures. At this point I can only be suggestive. [Piper, *The Pleasures of God*]

1. God is pleased in his Son. Mt 17:5
2. God is pleased in all his works. Ps 115:3; 135:6; Is 46:9-10
3. God is pleased in the fame of his name. Ezk 36:20-23; etc.
4. God is pleased in election. Lk 10:21
5. God is pleased in his Son’s saving work. Is 53:10
6. God is pleased in his people. Zeph 3:17

7. God is pleased in the prayers of the upright. Prov 15:8
8. God is pleased in obedience. 1 Sm 15:22
9. God is pleased to give us the kingdom. Lk 12:32

Apply: What do you know about sharing in God's pleasures? We were created to have fellowship, which means in part, to share life with God. So are you connecting with God in these areas? In the words of the psalmist, I invite you to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps 34:8).