

Walking in Light

Ephesians 5:8-14

Even though I was raised in a Christian home and went to church all my life, it wasn't until I was in college that Jesus saved me. I made a decision to trust Christ in May of 1982. My roommate at that time was not a believer. On several occasions as I was in my dorm room my roommate would pull out a pornographic magazine. He would thumb through the pages and comment on each woman's finer features. And then he would ask what I thought. How should you as a Christian respond to such situations?

Or, maybe you're with a group of people at work when someone shares the latest dirty joke. Should you smile or scowl? Or maybe they start talking badly about the boss or another employee who is not in the conversation. Should you scold them? Should you say nothing and just walk away?

These are the difficult, real-life situations that the apostle Paul addresses in our text. He is answering the question of how we, as children of light, should relate to a morally dark world. Here in Ephesians 5 Paul gives us principles to guide the way we live and interact with each other and with the unbelieving world. By understanding these principles, each of us can think through how to respond when these situations arise, as they surely will.

V.8 of our text proclaims that as believers we are now **"light in the Lord."** Jesus said in Mt.5:14, **"You are the light of the world."**

Most of us are familiar with Jesus' dramatic self-revelation in Jn.8:12, **"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."** Some of us are familiar with the direct context... that the Savior made this statement after He had forgiven the woman caught in adultery. However the greater cultural context was **"the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles"** (7:1). At the end of these great feast days, the Jews practiced a tradition known as the *Illumination of the Temple*. In the Temple treasury stood four massive golden candelabras topped with huge torches. It is said that they were as high as the highest walls of the temple. There was a ladder for each and young priests climbed the ladders to fill four great bowls, that each held over 20 gallons of oil. Eyewitnesses said that when the wicks were lit at evening the huge flames illuminated all of Jerusalem. While the Levites played songs of praise on musical instruments, men worshipped by dancing around them with burning torches in their hands singing. Can you imagine the smell of the oil, the heat of the smoking torches and the shadows of the bearded priests as they whirled about? This strange celebration commemorated the great pillar of fire, God's glory cloud that led the Israelites through the wilderness to the Promised Land (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p.361 and Hughes, p.164).

In that same place early the next morning with the smells of last night's celebration still lingering in the breeze, Jesus proclaimed, **"I am the light of the world."** The Jews knew exactly what He meant. It was as if He was saying, **"I am the glory of the pillar of cloud that guided your ancestors and lit up the night for them. I am the *Shekinah* that descended on Solomon's Temple. I am the light of the world and if you follow Me you will never ever be in the dark again!"**

Light generally represents one of two things in the Bible:

1. Knowledge and truth – Intellectually light refers to truth. As the opposite of light, darkness then represents ignorance.

2. Holiness – morally light refers to holiness. So darkness refers to evil or wickedness.

Now if you are a Christian you walk in the light. 1 John 1:5 says, **"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."** Walking in light means living in God's truth and holiness.

Jesus is **"the light"** and by our relationship with Him we are also called **"light in the Lord."** The difference is that our light is a reflection of His light, like the moon which shines brightly at night—not because it has any light in itself, but because it reflects the light of the sun. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, **"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."** Because of our spiritual union with Jesus, we become reflectors, like a mirror, shining the light of Jesus so that His glory is revealed in us.

Notice that verse 8 says, **"You WERE once darkness but now you ARE light in the Lord."** It doesn't say we were **"in the darkness"** or that we are now **"in the light."** It says we **"were darkness"** and now we **"are light."**

A. First, we **"were once darkness."** We know from Ephesians 2 that we came to Christ we **"were dead in trespasses and sins"** (2:1). We were not the children of God but the children of Satan. We were utterly helpless to save ourselves. We were ignorant of God's truth and devoid of God's holiness. We were hopelessly and helplessly lost, void of any light whatsoever. We were not only in the dark, we were part of the darkness. Colossians 1:13 says, **"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."** We were darkness, but all that has changed because of Jesus.

B. Second, by God's grace we have been made **"light in the Lord."** Because Jesus saved us we are **"in Christ."** Because we are **"in Christ"** we are now **"light of the Lord."** Though Scripture sometimes speaks of believers being in and of the light, through Christ we become **"the light of the world"** with Him. We who were once children of darkness have become **"children of light."**

Here's the point, because we are **"light in the Lord"** we are to **"walk as children of the light."** We are to be noticeably different from those who dwell in darkness. As we have been saying each week, *Jesus should make a difference in our lives!* V.1 tells us we are to be **"imitators of God."** V.2 says we are to **"walk in love."** Vv.5-6 tell us that people who walk in darkness will never have an inheritance in heaven. V.7 tells us we are not to be **"partakers"** with them.

In this section of Ephesians, we will learn what it means to **"walk as children of the light."**

I. When we Walk in the Light we Bear Good Fruit (vv.8-10).

If we are walking **"as children of the light"** there will be certain characteristics that will be evident in our lives. Paul calls these characteristics **"the fruit of the Spirit"** or the **"fruit of the light."** As Christ's light shines through us there should be a prism effect, we should reflect **"goodness," "righteousness,"** and **"truth"**—living to please the Lord. You may go to church, carry a Bible, give money, and be baptized but the real test of being a true Christian is spiritual **"fruit."**

These characteristics help us inspect our lives. When I was at the Air Force Academy, unlike other colleges we didn't always look forward to Saturday. Even

though we had a day off from academics, we often did not have the day off our military training. In fact on many Saturdays they held special inspections called SAMIs or Saturday Morning Inspections. Often we would stay up most of the night Friday night properly folding all the clothes in our dressers, dusting everything possible, and waxing the floors 'til they shined. If God were doing a SAMI of our lives He would probably be looking for these things. These verses are the Holy Spirit's inspection of our **"walk."**

A. Walking in the Light produces **Goodness** (v.9a).

"Goodness" comes from an interesting Greek term that means to benefit someone. This kind of goodness is in the context how I relate to others. You might describe it as "love in action." It refers to moral excellence, generosity, the act of willingly sacrificing or giving of one's self for others. Paul had this in mind in 1 Thess.5:15 which says, **"Always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all."**

A life of **"goodness"** does not just happen. It takes practice. If you don't practice self-sacrificing love in little things, you won't have it for the big things.

I have heard people say, *"If I won the lottery, I'd give enough money to pay for a new church building"* (I always say that the lottery is a tax for people who are bad with math!). I wonder if they really would. Because if we are not self-sacrificing with what we have now, what makes us think we would if we had more?

Learn to practice **"goodness"** in the little things first. Do some unexpected kindness for you mate. Turn off the tube and surprise your children by spending time with them. Volunteer for some needed but undesirable task in your church. Help a neighbor. Be a courteous driver. Practice **"goodness"** in the little things and you'll be ready for the big sacrifices.

B. Walking in the Light produces **Righteousness** (v.9b).

"Righteousness" means living rightly before God. God has made us righteous before Him in Christ (2 Cor.5:21). According to 1 Tim.6:11 we are to **"pursue righteousness"** before men. If **"goodness"** is living for the benefit of others, **"righteousness"** means living for the glory of God.

Does **"righteousness"** characterize your life? If so, you will walk what you talk. If so, you will have the same commitments on Monday morning that you had on Sunday morning. If so, you won't have to tell others, it will be obvious to them.

C. Walking in the Light Produces **Truth** (v.9c).

"Truth" is pretty simple. It means the absence of deception, falsehood and hypocrisy. **"Goodness"** is about how we relate to others. **"Righteousness"** is about how we relate to God. **"Truth"** is about integrity and honesty in myself.

In 4:15, Paul teaches us that we are to be **"speaking the truth in love."** 4:25 says we are to be **"putting away lying"** and to **"speak truth."** Jesus said that we are to be so honest and forthright in our speech that our **"Yes"** will be **"Yes"** and our **"No"** will be **"No"** (Mt.5:37; cf. Ja.5:12).

Two little old ladies were walking around a somewhat overcrowded English country churchyard and came upon a tombstone that was inscribed, **"Here lies John Smith, a politician and an honest man."** **"Good heavens!"** said one lady

to the other. **"Isn't it awful that they had to put two people in the same grave!"**

If we are walking **"as children of the light"** Jesus will make a difference in what we say. Honesty will always be our policy.

D. Walking in the Light **Pleases** the Lord (v.10).

Another aspect of walking in the light is living to please the Lord. This comes in v.10, **"finding out what is acceptable to the Lord."** This means finding and doing the will of God.

A great many believers struggle with knowing the will of God in their lives. For them, God's will is some cosmic mystery to be discovered. Get this! God's will is not a mystery! It is written in black and white in that book before you. If you will search the Word to find out **"what is acceptable to the Lord"** and then do it, you will not only know God's will, but you will be in God's will and be doing God's will!

On the other hand, if you don't study the Word and/or you don't do what you learn there, you will not please Him. Ja.4:17 says, **"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."**

If we are obedient to what we know, our knowledge of the Lord will increase. If we are faithful to the light we have, we will be given more light.

The greatest evidence of genuine salvation is fruit. The most certain assurance of salvation is the Word of God. And God's Word tells us the fruit that should be present in our lives when we are saved. Though we may fall into sin from time to time, if we are truly born again there will be spiritual fruit in our lives. We will **"walk as children of the light."**

II. When we Walk in the Light we Turn from Darkness (vv.11-13).

A. Walking in the Light means **Opposing** the Darkness (v.11a).

V.11 says we are to **"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."** We are to bear the **"fruit of the Spirit"** not be **"unfruitful."**

The Greek word behind **"fellowship"** means "to participate or partake in." Today after the worship service we will share in a fellowship meal. It's a time when we partake of food and good conversation together. **"Fellowship"** with other believers is vital for healthy spiritual growth.

However, we are never to partake in the **"unfruitful works of darkness."** Remember v.7, **"Do not be partakers with them."** We are not to be associated so closely with people or things which are evil and sinful that darkness will take root in our lives.

Have you ever noticed how things die in the dark? Put a plant in a dark room long enough and it will die. By the same token, put that plant in a room and shine light on it and it will flourish. The same is true of our spiritual lives.

When I sin as a Christian, it's like I am trying to turn off the light in my life. I cannot be darkness again because Christ lives in me, but at times I can do the deeds of darkness. But think about how stupid it is when I do that.

Imagine it this way -imagine yourself lost in a cave. And you keep trying to find your way out but you get deeper and deeper. The cave is a maze and a network of tunnels. And pretty soon you're down in the belly of the earth somewhere and

you haven't the slightest idea where you are, you're scared, your heart is pounding, you're eyes are wide open, but all you can see is an oppressive blackness that looks like it is liquid. And in the midst of that darkness you grope for days. And days pass into a week and the week begins into another week and finally you're feeling the cold, rock walls and the frenzy is mounting. And the fear is escalating, and then way off somewhere there is a pinpoint of light. And you move toward the light and you grope, lest you fall into a deeper pit. And finally the light begins to crack open and you see the exit. You charge out of there with all the strength that's left. Finally you're in the daylight and the sun is beaming down on you. And you know a warmth and a freedom like you've never conceived possible before such a terrible plight.

And then not long after, you begin to think that the sun's rays are far too harsh. You long for the cold walls of the cave. So you wind your way back into that miserable place. Do you see how foolish that is?

That's essentially what a Christian does when he wants to do the deeds of darkness. It makes no sense. Paul says, **"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."**

B. Walking in the Light means **Exposing** Darkness (v.11b-13).

It is not enough just to oppose or be against the **"works of darkness"** we must also **"expose"** them. **"Expose"** comes from a word that means "reproof, correction, punishment or discipline."

This goes completely against the grain of our culture. In all our inclusive, multi-cultural, politically correct thinking the one commonly lauded value is *tolerance*. Kent Hughes says that the motto of modern man is **"The one thing I will not tolerate is intolerance."** According to the world, religion ought to be as broad and accepting as possible.

The problem is we can't **"walk as children of the light,"** we can't bear **"the fruit of the Spirit,"** we can't epitomize **"goodness, righteousness, and truth"** if we ignore evil. To ignore sin is to encourage it. To keep quiet about it is to promote it.

How do we **"expose"** sin? Let me suggest how it is to happen on two levels:

a. First, we "expose" sin INDIRECTLY, that is we give a reproof by the way we live our lives. While others cheat, we deal honestly. While others speak coarsely, we speak with purity. While others lie, we tell the truth. While others corrupt, we edify. While others clamor, we impart grace. While others engage in sexual immorality, we remain sexually pure. In so doing, we fulfill what Jesus said in Mt.5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

b. Second, we "expose" sin DIRECTLY. Silent testimony only goes so far. Sometimes we must speak and act. This gets back to how you respond to dirty jokes or to someone who wants you to view pornography. Here's the principle: Be as bold in your witness for Christ as the other person is in his solicitation to evil. If they are bold for Satan, why shouldn't you be just as bold for the Savior? Smile and say something like, "I used to love that sort of thing, but now I belong to Jesus Christ and I want to please Him." And share your concern for him. Shine the light by what you say.

Paul goes on to say that it is "**shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.**" Some sin is so disgusting we should not even discuss it. It's like some diseases, nuclear waste and dangerous chemicals that must be disposed of by trained professionals.

V.13 says that "**all things that are exposed are made manifest** [apparent, visible] **by the light.**"

III. When we Walk in the Light we become Spiritually Awake (v.14).

A. This verse is first a wake-up call for believers in a spiritual slumber.

It is probably an adaptation of Is.60:1, "**Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.**" It possibly appeared in this form as part of an early resurrection hymn. It is a call for spiritual Rip Van Winkle to wake up and walk in Christ's light.

When you walk into a dark room early in the morning, you don't switch the darkness off and then switch the light on. No, you just switch the light on and the darkness has to flee. Darkness does not put out light. Listen, darkness is not the problem, and it never has been the problem. The problem is no light.

You don't have to go out on the street corner and get on a soapbox and preach against the darkness of the world. Arise! Shine! Jesus, the Light of the World lives in you! Let His light shine! Your neighbors will see the difference. Your wife or husband will see the difference. Everybody will see the difference. It is incredible when Christ lives in you. Immediately people are affected. You don't even know it, but that light is penetrating the deeds of darkness and the world of evil. When you shine the light, it puts out the darkness.

B. This verse is second a wake-up call for those who need to be saved.

Note the line, "**Arise from the dead.**"

If a man or woman is born again by faith in Jesus Christ he has been translated out of the kingdom of darkness, out of the power of Satan, and brought into the kingdom of light, into the power of God. He has been removed from helpless bondage to the deceiving, alluring propaganda of the world that has kept him helpless, and he has been brought into the power of God. This is the whole Christian gospel. If that has not happened, then you have not been born again, for that is what the new birth does. Are you ready to wake up to true spiritual life?

Conclusion: In His autobiography, Benjamin Franklin tells of wanting to convince the citizens of Philadelphia to light the streets at night as a protection against crime and a convenience for evening travel. When he failed to influence them by his words, he bought an attractive lantern and placed it on a long bracket that extended from the front of his house. Each evening at dusk, he lit the wick. His neighbors noticed the warm glow in front of his home. Passersby appreciated the way the light helped them make their way over the rough cobblestone streets. Soon others began placing lanterns in front of their homes too. Eventually the city recognized the need for well-lighted streets (Anders p.135).

May we rise and shine that others will see the need for God's light in their lives as well.