

Living in the Light

Scripture: Ephesians 5:8–14

Code: 1933

INTRODUCTION

The book of Ephesians presents the pattern for Christian living. The first three chapters delineate who the Christian is. The last three describe how he lives. Our behavior as Christians can be summed up in two statements: "Walk worthy" (4:1) and be "followers [imitators] of God" (5:1). If we're going to imitate God, we're going to need a pattern. Therefore verse 2 says, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." We are to be like Christ.

Walking like Christ has many facets. We've already been told we should walk in humility (4:1-3), in unity (4:4-16), in newness (4:17-32), and in love (5:1-7). In our present study we will see that we must also walk in light, for we are children of light.

A. The Contrast Between Light and Darkness

1. Symbolized

a) Light

In the intellectual sense, light symbolizes truth. In the moral sense, it refers to holiness. Living in light means living in truth and in holiness.

b) Darkness

In contrast, darkness refers to ignorance in the intellectual sense and evil in the moral sense.

2. Illustrated

a) Intellectually

(1) Proverbs 6:23--"The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light." Here light refers to truth, not deeds. God's Word is intellectual truth.

(2) Psalm 119:105--"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

(3) 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, 6--"If our gospel be hidden it is hidden to them that are lost, in whom the god of this age hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them.... For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

b) Morally

(1) Isaiah 5:20--"Woe unto them who call evil, good, and good, evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put the bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

(2) Romans 13:12-13--"The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness."

Intellectual darkness represents an ignorance of God and His truth, which results in moral darkness--doing evil deeds. But intellectual light represents knowledge of the truth and results in moral light--living the truth.

B. The Character of a Christian

1. Stated

A Christian walks in the light.a) 1 John 1:5, 7--"This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (v. 5). If you are a son of God, you are a son of light. And if you are a son of light, there is no darkness in you. When you were redeemed, you were fully redeemed; there is no residual darkness. Christians don't walk in darkness. Verse 7 says, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanseth us from all sin." Look at the verse in reverse: If we received God's forgiveness through Christ, we will have fellowship with one another and walk in the light.b) Matthew 5:14--"Ye are the light of the world."c) 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5--"Ye, brethren, are not in darkness.... Ye are all sons of light." Since God is light and He gave birth to us, we too become light.d) Colossians 1:13--"[God] hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."e) John 8:12--Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

There's no middle ground: when we were saved we were taken out of darkness into light. When we sin, we may do deeds of darkness, but we do them in the light so they will therefore be exposed.

2. Commanded

Ephesians 5:8 says, "Walk as children of light." Since we are children of light and since God our Father is light, we are the light of the world. As such we can't walk in darkness. Light and darkness are opposites.

We live in a dark world that's desperately in need of the light we can give it. The only way we can be effective in doing that is to walk as children of light. In 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 Paul says, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" The answer is nothing. Paul went on to say, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (7:1). Since we are light, we must live like light.

Why Would Anyone Want to Go Back in the Cave?

When a Christian sins and engages in the deeds of darkness, it's as if he's had a relapse. Imagine yourself lost in a cave. As you attempt to find your way out, you only proceed deeper and deeper into the network of tunnels in the cave. Soon you're in the belly of the earth without the slightest idea where you are. You're scared. Your heart is pounding. Your eyes are wide open, but all you can see is an oppressive blackness. You grope for days, and the days pass into a week, and then into another week. Your fear mounts as all hope seems lost. Suddenly, off in the distance, there is a pinpoint of light. You move toward the light, groping lest you fall into a deeper pit. Finally the light begins to widen and you find yourself at an exit from the cave! You charge out with what strength you have left into the daylight. You then know a freedom like nothing you ever conceived was possible before such a terrible plight.

However, not long after your escape you decide there were several things you enjoyed in the cave. So you go back in. How foolish! Yet that's essentially what a Christian does when he follows after deeds of darkness.

LESSON

In Ephesians 5:8-14 Paul tells us five things we need to know if we're going to walk as children of light.

I. THE CONTRAST (v. 8)

"Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light."

A. Our Past Problem

The Greek verb translated "were" is emphatic. It emphasizes the fact that our darkness is in the past. In Ephesians 2 Paul says, "[You] were dead in trespasses and sins; in which in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we all had our manner of life in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.... Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who once were far off he made near by the blood of Christ" (vv. 1-3, 12-13). Throughout Ephesians we read of what we were without Christ and what we are in Him. We are to live what we are.

Notice Ephesians 5:8 says, "Ye were once darkness." It doesn't say you were in darkness; it says you were darkness. You were not an innocent victim of Satan's system; you were a contributor. Whatever dominion we are in we are a part of. No worldly system of evil exists apart from the contributors to that system, be they demons or men. And no system of light exists apart from those who are the light of the world, be they Christ or His followers.

Let's look at four characteristics of our former darkness.

1. We did the works of Satan

People in the darkness do "the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11). They are ignorant of what is holy and don't exhibit the life of God in their hearts. Instead they do the works of Satan because he is their father (John 8:44) and "the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53).

The average non-Christian doesn't understand that he is empowered and energized by Satan. He doesn't have to foam at the mouth or have seven demons in him. But Satan controls him nonetheless. It's just a matter of degree. The same hell will be occupied by people who were energized by Satan, whether a businessman from Wall Street or a witch doctor from Africa.

2. We were ruled by Satan

Children of Satan not only do his deeds, but also are dominated by him. People will often claim they don't want to become Christians because they'll have to give up their freedom. But the only "freedom" they truly know is groping through a dark cave trying to find a way out! That's no freedom. People don't have freedom before they become Christians--they've been victimized by Satan's rule. The kingdom of darkness is ruled by the prince of darkness. And he rules the lives of all who are in the darkness.

3. We were under the penalty of divine wrath

Romans 1:18 says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness." His wrath will fall on those whose "foolish heart was darkened" (v. 21), "who exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (v. 25), and "did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (v. 28).

Jesus said, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not where he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the sons of light.... But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.... Therefore, they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them" (John 12:35-37, 39-40). When a person says he won't believe, there may come a time when God judicially confirms him in his unbelief.

4. We were sentenced to eternal darkness

Matthew 8:12 says they "shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

B. Our Present Privilege

According to Ephesians 5:8 we were once darkness, but now we are light. Paul used light and darkness--absolute opposites--to contrast what we once were with what we are. Instead of doing the works of Satan, we do the works of God: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10). We are no longer under the rule of Satan; we are under the lordship of Jesus Christ. We are no longer under God's wrath; we are participants in the kingdom of light. We won't go to a place of darkness; we will go to a place of light where "the Lamb is the lamp of it" (Rev. 21:23).

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS (vv. 9-10)

A. The Fruit (v. 9)

"The fruit of the [light] is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."

Many people claim they are Christians because they once made a decision for Christ years ago, have gone to church for years, are very religious, have given a lot of money to the church, or were baptized. But the ultimate test is that the children of light inevitably produce the fruit of light.

1. Described

a) Goodness

The fruit of goodness is a picture of how we relate to other people. Three words in the Greek language can be translated "good."

(1) Kalos means "free from defects" or "beautiful." It could refer to a good painting, a good jar, or a good tapestry.

(2) Chrestos means "useful." It could refer to something that's good for digging a hole or good for holding things together.

(3) Agathos means "moral excellence." One lexicon says it is especially active on behalf of others. That is the word translated "goodness" in Ephesians 5:9. It's a goodness that touches people with a positive and morally excellent effect. In 1 Thessalonians 5:15 Paul says to do good to everyone. If you're a child of light, you ought be good to others.

b) Righteousness

Righteousness refers to our relationship with God. We ought never to deviate from His pure path of holiness.

c) Truth

Truth can refer to integrity, honesty, reliability, trustworthiness--anything opposed to the hypocrisy of our old life. Those are internal traits.

2. Demonstrated

If we are walking as children of light, we will exhibit the fruit of light toward others, toward God, and even in ourselves. We can determine we are in the light if we see the fruit of light in our life.

Also we can get a good idea if people who claim to be in the light truly are. In Matthew 7 Jesus says, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit" (vv. 15-17). All Christians bear fruit. Many may produce only a small yield, but there's no such thing as a Christian with no fruit. Then Jesus said, "A corrupt tree bringeth forth bad fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them" (vv. 17-20).

If you are a child of light, you will produce the fruit of light. Those who claim to be children of light but don't produce any fruit are liars or are deceived. Christians will experience a drop in fruit production when they sin, but they can't help but produce some fruit--some goodness, righteousness, and truth.

B. The Proof (v. 10)

"Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord."

We must live out the fruit of light to verify we are saved. The joy of the believer is to be a living example of God's truth--to be a living verification of what is pleasing to God.

When I was in Damascus, I discovered that the shops don't have windows. If you want to buy something, you have to take it out into the street and hold it up to the light to detect any flaws. Only items passing that test are purchased. Similarly, the only way to evaluate our lives is to expose every action, decision, and motive to the light of Christ and His Word.

When I go to the airport and put my suitcase through the X-ray machine, I never worry about what the guard might see. I don't have anything to hide. I don't carry any guns or bombs. That's the way we ought to be as Christians. We shouldn't mind having the light reveal what we are because it should only verify the truthfulness of our identity. We ought to be willing to expose our lives to light to prove that we are light.

III. THE COMMAND (v. 11a)

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

The Greek verb *koinoneo* means "fellowship." But in verse 11 Paul uses an intensified form of the verb: *sunkoinoneo*, which means "intimate fellowship." We are not to be intimately involved with "the unfruitful works of darkness"--the ignorance and immorality of the world.

However that doesn't mean we can't talk with unsaved people. We have been commissioned to reach them with the gospel, but we must not participate in their sin. Some people have suggested that our witness would be more effective if we got involved in their sin. That's not true--it will destroy our testimony. The only effective way to witness to them is to avoid their evil deeds.

In 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 Paul tells us that we shouldn't associate with fornicators, covetors, and idolaters who claim to be Christians. But he didn't forbid us from ministering to the people in the world characterized by those sins--they need us to reach out and love them. We only are commanded not to participate in their sin.

IV. THE COMMISSION (vv. 11b-13)

A. Expose Evil Deeds (v. 11b)

"But, rather, reprove them."

The Greek word translated "reprove" means "to expose." Rather than doing what people in the world do, we're to expose their evil. You could call us the spiritual CIA: our job is to expose the crimes of darkness. Our tool is the Word of God: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16, NASB, emphasis added). We're to expose evil by our life and by our words.

1. By our life

Sometimes just the way we live can expose the evil in people's lives. Have you ever walked up to people who know you're a Christian and who happen to be in the middle of a filthy conversation? Does it suddenly turn clean? When the non-Christians I happened to be playing golf with found out I was a pastor, their attitudes and words changed. I've known some people who lived such godly lives in the ungodly environment of their work that they were fired. They became too much of a rebuke to the system.

2. By our words

We also are commissioned by God to verbally expose the evil of the world. We must diagnose it, confront it, and then offer the solution. Sin is a cancer that must be removed. You aren't helping anyone by ignoring it. We can't politely live in the world and love people without ever acknowledging sin. That's not evangelism. People need to be convicted about their sin before they'll ever see the need for a Savior.

One problem we have is that we don't see the contrast between light and darkness as dramatically as God sees it. So instead of avoiding the deeds of darkness, we may be tempted to play around with them. We should be mature enough spiritually that we search out evil and expose it, and then offer the diagnosis and cure. Unfortunately many Christians are barely able to keep themselves from darkness, let alone help others out of it. As believers we need to expose evil, and when we do, it will have an impact on our lives.

B. Don't Speak of Shameful Things (v. 12)

"It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."

The evil deeds of the world desperately need to be reproved. The things they do are unspeakably evil. We are drowning in a sea of evil heavily promoted by the media as anything but that. The danger is we can get caught up in that lie. But we must not compromise--don't ever entertain evil in a conversation. Yet by watching certain television programs or movies in our homes we teach our children to tolerate the very things we shouldn't even talk about.

We must get beyond struggling over our sin. We need to grow up so we can reprove others and expose evil.

C. Bring Light to the Darkness (v. 13)

"All things that are reproved are made manifest by the light; for whatever doth make manifest is light."

Our commission is to expose sin in the world because we are the light. If we don't do it, it won't be exposed. No one is ever saved unless he comes to God and repents of his sin. But unbelievers won't know what sin is unless someone exposes it to them. Loving people while tolerating their sin is not evangelism. True evangelism makes people face the fact of their sin. Only we can do that because we are the light of the world.

V. THE CALL (v. 14)

"Wherefore, he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

"He saith" refers to what the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 60:1: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." That verse looked forward to the Messiah, and Paul's interpretation looks back to what Christ has done.

Many Bible commentators believe that Ephesians 5:14 is a line from an Easter hymn sung by the early church. They see it as an invitation--a gospel presentation. The sinner is the one who sleeps, the invitation is to awake and arise, and the Savior is Christ, who will give light.

Like Rip Van Winkle, men and women are sleeping through an age, only in this case its an age of grace. When they wake up it will be too late. So Paul said to awake and arise from the dead. Conclusion

I remember reading of a great fire in Edinburgh where people gathered in a passageway that led to the street. They had almost reached safety when they were suddenly met by a billow of smoke rushing into the passageway. Instead of continuing on through the smoke, they turned back and entered a deceitfully open door. They were suddenly trapped and burned to death. If they only had seen one ray of light through the smoke, they would have lived.

The ray of light is Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Horatius Bonar, in the nineteenth-century hymn "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say," put that truth in these words:

I heard the voice of Jesus say,

"I am this dark world's Light;

Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,

And all thy day be bright."

I looked to Jesus, and I found,

In Him my Star, my Sun;

And in that Light of life I'll walk,

Till trav'ling days are done.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What do light and darkness represent in Scripture?
2. Give some examples of their use in Scripture.
3. What happens to believers when they are saved (Col. 1:13)?
4. What is the believer's relationship to darkness (Eph. 5:8)?
5. What four things characterized that relationship? Explain each.
6. In contrast to our relationship to darkness, what is characteristic of our relationship to light?
7. What is the fruit of the light? Describe it (Eph. 5:9).
8. What key factor did Jesus say would reveal false prophets (Matt. 7:15-20).
9. What proves the reality of a person's salvation?
10. What command do we find in Ephesians 5:11? Explain.
11. With that command in mind, how can you reconcile our need to reach the unsaved with the gospel?
12. What are we to do to deeds of darkness? How (Eph. 5:11)?
13. What is a problem Christians have in understanding light and darkness?
14. What must unbelievers be exposed to before they can be saved? Who is responsible to do that?

Pondering the Principles

1. Look up the following verses: Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 1:12-13; 1 John 1:6-7; and Revelation 21:23. Those references contrast what we have in Christ with what we were in Satan's dominion of darkness. Make note of each contrast. Thank God for each specific privilege He has granted you. How should those privileges affect your behavior as a Christian?
2. In what ways are you presently exposing evil by your life and words? It's difficult to be effective in that effort if the unbelievers you know don't know certain facts. Do unbelievers at work know you are

a Christian? What about your unsaved neighbors? If you haven't accomplished this first step, begin praying for opportunities to let them know you are a Christian. Be sure you take advantage of the opportunities God gives you. Also be sure your life is consistent with God's Word: unbelievers will be able to spot hypocrisy. As you do those things you'll have an opportunity to share in greater detail the ramifications of sin and the good news of the gospel.

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