Ephesians 5:3-14

Walk As Children of Light

Sermon

We are now returning to our study through the book of Ephesians and to our sermon series, a "New Way to Walk". Paul is describing a new way to walk for the Ephesians. In our last two sermons Paul told us that we are to *walk in love* towards one another – the way we speak, how we handle anger, the way we work with our hands, how we forgive one another – we are to imitate God and walk in love with Christ as our ultimate example. Now in our passage this morning Paul shifts from "love" to "light". We see the central command in v.8:

> **for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8)**

Notice the contrast… "you WERE darkness"…now "YOU ARE LIGHT". Here is the main idea this morning:

"walk as children of light" because you "ARE light in the Lord."

Do you remember what it was like to live in darkness before Jesus shined on you? Can you remember the emptiness, the confusion, the lack of hope, the lack of purpose and meaning and truth – and I was totally in the dark regarding the judgment that I deserved that was coming. That's no longer who you are…God has shined His light upon you.

Light is used as a metaphor all throughout Scripture. It was also a common way among the Jews and Gentiles alike to describe conversion, and truth, and the children of God vs. the children of darkness. It was a metaphor used to speak of the dueling forces of God and evil. God is said to be light (1 John 1:5) and at creation He spoke light into the world (Gen. 1:3). It is walking in the light where we have fellowship with God who dwells in unapproachable light (1 Jn. 1:7; 1 Tim. 6:16). Jesus, the Son of God, when He came described Himself as "the light of the World" taking this common metaphor for God and applying it to Himself (Jn. 8:12) – Jesus is no mere man, He is God in the flesh and the source of light. Our conversion is described as coming to the light:

> **For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," [that's the creation of the universe] has shone in our hearts [that's conversion] to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6)**

Jesus came as a light to the Gentiles who were formerly in darkness (Lk. 2:32). God's children are described as children of light, and Jesus said to His followers, "you are the light of the world" (1 Thess. 5:5; Mt. 5:14-15). One day, we will live in God's Kingdom where there

will be no more darkness or need for a lamp or the sun for God Himself will be our light (Rev. 22:5). So God is the source of light, He Himself is described as light, He has shone light into this world and into our hearts, we are to now be the light of the world, and our future existence will be dwelling forever in the unending light of God!

Therefore…walk in the light, because you are children of light! Be who you are. Become the way in which God describes you. Light reveals and represents the truth, light draws others out of darkness into light, light overcomes darkness, and light is our eternal home.

1. Children of light flee from the dark (Eph. 5:3-7)

When I was a child I hated to go into our basement. It was dark down there! My mom would tell me to go downstairs and turn off the lights I forgot to turn off…and I would flick the switch and run as fast as I could back upstairs. We're afraid of the dark…you can't see well in the dark. There is confusion there. The dark is where evil things lurk. Look at vv.3-4:

> **But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. [4] Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. (5:3-4)**

There are dark things (perhaps they lurk behind us in our past) we need to run from as children of the light. These are things that "must not even be named among us" because they are not "proper among saints". Lorrie and I are planning a trip to Scotland. We've discovered where my namesake (the Maclean clan) comes from on the Isle of Mull. The McClain crest bears the words, "Virtue Is Mine Honor". I might tell Isaac or Sarai… "you bear the name of McClain…and you need to honor that name!" How much more important is it for you and I who bear the name of "Christ" or of "saint" – set apart one, holy one. Paul says, these deeds of darkness should not be even named among you! They are not "proper" or "fitting"…they are "out of place". I used to wear size 32 waist jeans…that ship has sailed! That's not who I am anymore. I used to fit right into this type of lifestyle…but now I am to flee from it!

First, Paul mentions a couplet: "sexual immorality and all impurity". The Bible is clear that God is not a prude! He created sex and it is meant to be fully enjoyed as a gift of intimacy and oneness within the marriage relationship – PERIOD! Outside of the marriage relationship that is between one man and one woman it is immoral. **Hebrews 13:4 tells us:**

> **Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. (Heb. 13:4)**

How many of you know that everything God created is good and is meant to be enjoyed in its proper time and proper place. When we go against God's design there is pain, and confusion, and shame, and guilt, and separation from God. It isn't just the act of sexual

intercourse outside of marriage, but "all impurity". "impurity" is the opposite of "holiness". The book of Leviticus has endless rules for purity – God's desire and demand is for HOLINESS for His people. We no longer live under the Levitical laws, but the principle of holiness remains! Everything must be given to God - our hearts, our hands, our eyes, our mouths, our feet – everything is to be fully devoted to God. Jesus said to even "look" lustfully on someone who is not your spouse is adultery and sin. And we know it's wrong because there is immediately shame, and guilt. Especially as men, we need to set very strict boundaries protecting us and our marriages and our families. Sexual immorality will DESTROY your life and your marriage or future marriage. But there is redemption and cleansing in Jesus…there is always forgiveness and hope and restoration for those who repent. Paul told the Thessalonians that each one should know how to control his own body in holiness and honor….for God has not called us for impurity but in holiness. (1 Thess. 4:4-7).

If you're single…stay far far away from anyone or anything that would draw you into sexual sin and impurity. If you have a television…never let the nakedness of another pass before your eyes. There is a verse that everyone who lives in our sex saturated culture needs to know.

> **Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. (1 Cor. 6:18)**

If you are struggling with sexual immorality or impurity there are so many ways you can fight against this…but don't lay down in the darkness and give up…RUN FOR YOUR LIFE! Remember Joseph when he was faced with temptation by Potiphar's wife…he ran! Make your wife whom God has graciously given you the ideal for beauty…not some stupid, phony billboard.

Second, Paul mentions "covetousness". It's a state of discontentment with what God has given you. In v.5 Paul says that covetousness is "idolatry". The moment you covet what someone else has, you are rejecting God's best for you – what He has allotted to you. Instead we should be content with what God has given us. Every parent knows that there are certain things our children want that would not be good for them…so we withhold it. Paul wrote this to the Philippians: "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content." (Phil. 4:11).

Covetousness is not fitting for the saints, neither is, v.4, "filthiness nor foolish talking nor crude joking"…obscene and trivial/wasteful speech. "Crude joking" is a wittiness (Sometimes wit can be fun and funny…but we need to be very careful with it…especially when it brings hurt or makes others look stupid)…these are "out of place". What is fitting? V.4 - "*instead let there be thanksgiving*." Use your mouths to praise and be thankful for others and for what

God has given you. *Each of us, if we would take the time to think of it, have so much to be thankful to God for. Our salvation alone is enough to praise Him for eternity.*

Now Paul gives a *very strong warning* for those who remain in the darkness…look at v.5:

> **For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has *no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God*. [6] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. [7] Therefore do not become partners with them (Eph. 5:5-7)**

Paul on several occasions in the NT repeats this statement. To be clear, the "inheritance" might be summarized as the culmination of all God has promised, including but not limited to, *eternal life*. Now it's important to see how Paul is arguing here. As children we have the inheritance of God and NOTHING can take that from us – Paul already spoke of the inheritance as guaranteed to the Ephesians in 1:13. So the issue here isn't about losing the inheritance of eternal life…the issue is *stolen identity*.

There was a Scottish man named Evan Cartwright whose net worth was estimated about 8million pounds. His "friend" Marcus Bell, at the opportune time, poisoned Evan, forged fake documents, and was able to successfully steal Evan's identity and take his inheritance. However, he was later caught and exposed.

The issue Paul poses here isn't a true child losing their inheritance, it's someone posing as a true child who never receives the inheritance. You can fool others, you can even fool yourself…but you cannot fool God. It is by faith and repentance in Christ that we become children and receive the inheritance…but the true test of a child of God is how they walk. Paul says, "do not be deceived" – There were those in Paul's day who were teaching that the grace of God was a license to live however they wanted – why not, Christ has forgiven you…live how you want! This isn't the mindset of a true child of God…and it's only the child of God who receives the Father's inheritance.

For those of you who have been dabbling in the darkness…Be very very careful. Paul warns us, v.7 - "do not become partners with them". You are either a son of the light or a son of disobedience and Paul makes it clear that the "wrath of God…comes upon the sons of disobedience".

2. **Children of light expose what is hidden (Eph. 5:8-13)**

Look again at v.8:

for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light [9] (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), [10] and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. (vv.8-10)

We WERE darkness…but now we ARE light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. Paul talks about the "produce" of light, "for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true." Three beautiful descriptions of one who walks in the light. "*good*" or goodness. Children of light do good towards those around us! "*right*" or righteous – children of light live righteous lives in response to the righteousness of Christ that we have received. "*true*" – we are to be truthful because light exposes what is false and light reveals what is true and real. AS we walk this way we expose what lies in the darkness…because light always brings out what is hidden.

Light is also a means of examination. Paul tells us in v.10 that we are to discern - or test, approve, discover – what is pleasing to the Lord. AS those who have been brought into the light by the God who dwells in unapproachable light, out of sheer gratitude and in response to His light shining in our lives we now seek to discover what pleases Him. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that "*we make it our aim to please Him*" (2 Cor. 5:9).

Have you ever asked yourself what does the Bible say pleases God? Here are a few things that "please" God:

Romans 12:1-2 tells us to offer our bodies to God as a living sacrifice and to be transformed in the way we think for that is "pleasing" to God. In Romans 14:17-18 - when we pursue righteousness, peace, and joy in our relationships with one another this is "pleasing" to God. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that faith pleases God…in fact apart from faith it is impossible to please God! Children seeking to obey their parents and employees seeking to please their employers pleases God (Col. 3:12; Tit. 2:9). Doing good and sharing what you have is a good and pleasing sacrifice to God (Heb. 13:16). In Micah 6:7-8 the prophet asks, will the Lord be pleased? He has shown you O man what is good – do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God…this is what the Lord requires of you…this is what pleases God. This is what it means to walk as children of light. We live to please the one who has blessed us so richly…when you've been touched by the light, you seek to walk in the light! You begin to pursue these glorious things.

Also…you seek to expose what remains hidden in the darkness…

When you go to the dentist you sit under that bright lamp for about an hour as they stare at all the junk that you've been hiding in between your teeth and down into your gums. AS children of the light we should constantly bring ourselves and one another under the light of God's truth so that what is hidden and harmful can be revealed. Look at v.11:

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but *instead expose them*. [12] For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. [13] But *when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible* (vv.11-13)

This verse tells us that God does not want things hidden in the closet. You have to know that the Ephesian culture was a culture that greatly valued honor and scorned the idea of shame. It was a shame/honor culture. There were secrets hidden in the closet that you would not let others know…it would bring shame upon you and your family. Things haven't changed much…especially with men, we have a very hard time allowing sin to be exposed in us…but if what's hidden remains in the darkness it cannot be healed!

Can I just ask you…who is the person in your life that knows all of the skeletons in your closet? Every one of us should have someone in our lives that we can trust that will lovingly hold us accountable.

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. (Gal. 6:1)

Someone who will gently take the tooth scraper and will apply it carefully and cautiously, and gently. Have you ever had a hygienist that is just rough? It hurts…it bleeds needlessly. Don't make each other bleed needlessly, be careful and gentle, but restore one another when hidden things are exposed.

3. Children of light remain vigilant (v.14)

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (v.14)

Remain vigilant!…you have to understand the intensity with which Paul writes v.14. Stay awake! No sleep walking! Children of light stay awake…especially in light of God's Coming Kingdom which is now here and is yet to come!

There is a vision that Paul has in his mind as he writes v.14 of God's Kingdom which now is and is to come. This isn't easily picked up on by simply reading the verse itself…but Paul does here what he frequently does, he doesn't make a *direct quote*, but an *allusion* to a major chunk of Scripture from the OT, namely, the book of Isaiah. Isaiah writes about a Kingdom of Light that is coming in the latter days. It comes with a specific progression – Paul is engaging with that progression in the book of Ephesians. As we come to a close I want to look together at some passages that show this progression - please turn to Isaiah 51. (Some of you Bible students out there will track along with me…for the others just listen carefully to the progression of Isaiah and God's Coming Kingdom of Light):

Look at v.9 - The people of Israel were being punished by the Gentile nations because of their sin against God. So Isaiah says to the Lord in v.9, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm

of the Lord; awake" (51:9). In this section, the Lord punishes the sins of His people, and he does so by using the pagan nations to punish them. However, having been punished sufficiently, Isaiah goes on later in chapter 51:17 to now tell the people of Israel to, "Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering." You who are still reeling from the spanking that God has given you…wake up now, stand now! Your punishment is past. Isaiah then writes this in 51:22-23 – "I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more; and I WILL PUT IT INTO THE HAND OF YOUR TORMENTORS". The same cup of punishment Israel was forced to drink, was now being passed to the Gentile nations whom God used to punish them. Then in 52:1-2 Isaiah writes, "Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean." The pagan nations that God used to punish you…they will no longer come in to you! "shake yourself from the dust and arise; be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion." Shake it off! Awake now! Put on your strength! Be strong…the punishment is over!

But what about the nations? Are they left drinking the cup of God's wrath? Will God not save them as well? Look at 52:7 – "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'. The NT writers pick up on this preaching of peace and show that it's not only to the Jews, but to the Gentile nations as well! Isaiah is writing about a latter day preaching of good news. Paul quotes this passage in Romans 10:15 to speak of evangelism. Also earlier in Ephesians 2 we saw that to the Gentiles God's message is now "preached peace to you who were far off and peace you those who were near" (Eph. 2:17). Later in Ephesians 6 Paul will again allude to this passage in Isaiah when he speaks of the armor we are to bear as Christians soldiers: "as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15). Isaiah is writing about a day that is coming when God will preach peace to Israel, AND TO the nations. Now flip over to Isaiah 60:1-3 – "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. [2] For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. [3] And *nations shall come to your light*, and kings to the brightness of your rising." The nations shall come to the light of the Lord! God's Kingdom of light that shines to all the earth will come…and Paul is looking back on all of this and he's saying, "WAKE UP CHURCH! THE LIGHT HAS COME!" Now is not the time to sleep Christians…now is the time to AWAKE! We live in God's promised Kingdom of light and God is now shining on the world…and you are the light of the world. Now is not the time to be playing with darkness! God has something for you to do! SHINE!! Shine on

the world around you! Fit your feet with the gospel of peace…the world needs to know that this Kingdom of light has come and is coming…a Kingdom where in the end there will be no more night, no need for lamps or the sun, for God Himself will be our light. God is calling us into this Kingdom of light and to share it with everyone around us! Who has God put in your path…in your life right now…to shine His light upon?!

I want to now pray and respond to this: Maybe you're here and you're still in darkness. Maybe you've been walking in darkness and you need to respond to the light…you've been hiding in the darkness…God is telling you to come out, to awake, and to live in His light…pray now for God's forgiveness. Maybe God has put people around you that you are to be a light to…but you've been hiding your light under a bushel…let's now respond to God and ask for forgiveness where needed and ask for opportunities to shine to be given!