

Ephesians 5:8-21

Good morning and thank you for joining us! Would you please turn in your bibles to Ephesians 5? If you recall this section in Ephesians gives all of us practical instructions on how to live our lives as Christians. Last week in our study we saw how we're to be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love towards others. This morning the Word continues to instruct us on how to walk.

I recently read the story of the captain of a Navy ship who looked into the dark night and saw faint lights in the distance directly in front of him. Immediately the captain told his signalman to send a message to the other vessel-'alter your course 10 degrees south.'

Promptly a return message was received-'alter your course 10 degrees north'

The captain was instantly angry-face began to boil-his command had been ignored. So he sent a second message-'alter your course 10 degrees south-I am the captain!'

Another message was received-'alter your course 10 degrees north-I am seamen 3rd class Jones'

The captain knew his 3rd message would invoke immediate fear-'alter your course 10 degrees south I am a battleship!'

Then the stunning reply came-'alter your course 10 degrees north-I am a lighthouse.'

The Bible has a lot to say about light. In fact we're called to be light aren't we?

Matthew 5:14-16 14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who

are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

This morning we're going to see how to walk as light in the dark world which we live in.

We're gonna study 8-21, and the title of this morning's message is WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Let's pray

To make sure we're not taking any verses out of context, let's read versus 1-7 then we'll begin our study in verse 8

1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know, [fn] that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any 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 be partakers with them.

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light Notice, before we came to Jesus, we didn't just walk in darkness, it says "(we) were once darkness." Before Christ, our lives were characterized by darkness.

It's interesting how the dictionary defines darkness. When you look it up it says darkness means "the absence of light." Rather than be understood by what it is and what it possesses, darkness is defined by what it's not and what it lacks.

SHOW PIC It's like walking into a dark cellar. You feel a dampness, a coldness. Creepy-crawlers are scurrying about. But that's what the dark attracts over time... dampness and cold - spiders and insects. **CLOSE PIC** But the darkness itself is simply an absence of light.

And this is the opposite of Jesus! **John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."**

Let's read verse 8 again

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

Genesis 1 tells us that when God first created life in the universe, His Spirit hovered over the darkness. That's when God spoke, "Let there be light and there was light."

And a similar miracle occurs in every believing heart. Just like when God created the universe, our Lord hovers over our darkness and chaos - that's all we could bring him. But then He speaks His Word into our lives, and it sparks new life. Let there be light, and there is light!

This isn't just my analogy, the bible compares God's first stroke of creation, with His new creation in us.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Recall, before we came to Christ we weren't just "in darkness," we "were darkness."

Now the reverse is true. In Christ we're not just "in the light," we "are light." As Christians we don't just change environments - going from "in the dark" to "in the light." Salvation is more than moving to a lighted room. God turns on the switch in our hearts. We're transformed from "darkness to light."

SHOW PIC There was once a cathedral lined with stain-glass windows. In each window was a mosaic of one of the saints of the church. A little girl who attended church was asked in Sunday School, "What is a saint?" She replied, "A saint is a person who has the light shine through!" **CLOSE PIC**

That's the definition in verse 8. As we saw last week, just like it's not enough for us to know God's love, we also should "walk in love". And it's not enough to just have the light of God, we also need to "walk as children of light."

9 (for the fruit of the Spirit[fn] is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), Every day, you and I make a series of choices. We choose if we want to walk in the light or lurk in the dark. Will we

tell the customer the truth, or lie to make a sale?... Will we confess that we were wrong, or in our pride continue to deny our failure?...

Will we pursue what's wholesome, or indulge in what's sinful?... Throughout each day we're choosing to walk in the light or hide in the shadows!

As children who walk in the light of Christ, we're to waive our lanterns for all to see-and this is done by our conduct! As one author put it, "You are the light of the world, but the switch must be turned on." We've got to shine!

I hope you know, your life is an advertisement for the Gospel... and most of the time it's not what we say, it's how we act that speaks loudest to others.

10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. Every believer is responsible to find out what pleases the Lord—how we are to “live in the light.” And in order to do that every believer must study God's Word and pray to find out how God would have us live out our lives.

This “finding out” naturally goes with “living out” because our knowledge must be put into practical use—doing what God calls us to do in every situation every day. **Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

The Christian life is meant to be both an inner renewal and an outward change of habit and lifestyle.

So we're told to walk in light, in all goodness, righteousness and truth, finding out the will of God...

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

SHOW PIC Where Kim and I are from in NY we would get about 80-90" of snow every winter. The cities up there use lots of salt to clear the roads of ice and snow. As time goes on, a mixture of exhaust, salt, and snow gets plastered onto the sides of cars. No matter the color underneath, all the cars end up looking a murky-gray. **CLOSE PIC**

But on the first warm, spring day somebody will wash their car and restore it to its original color. When everyone else sees the one clean car they realize how dirty their cars have become.

And as Christians we're called to be the one clean car. Without putting on the white glove - without being condemning or judgmental - we expose the darkness in others by simply being a beacon of God's light

Notice, Paul doesn't say avoid contact with the people of this world. We need to rub shoulders with lost people, how else can we shine our light for Jesus?

No the key is to not blend in. Too many Christians today, rather than act as "children of the light," they've become "children of the

twilight.” They’ve caved, and compromised. They’ve worked hard to blend in because they don’t want to stick out. Rather than live in the bright light of the Son of God, some Christians exist in a dim twilight of compromise.

12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. Believers shouldn’t even discuss the secret dark deeds of people in normal conversation. Discussing these things will just draw attention to them and may make them attractive.

13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Even the things done in secret will be exposed. They will be made manifest by the light of God’s searching judgment.

14 Therefore He says:

**“Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light.”** It’s interesting the things that a person can do while they’re asleep... You can talk in your sleep, and walk in your sleep. You can sing in your sleep... and laugh in your sleep. You can even smile and nod to the pastor while you’re asleep!

And the same is true of spiritual sleep. A Christian can be in a spiritual slumber - asleep to God, and unaware of His presence, and oblivious to His concerns... yet still sleep walk to church, and talk a good talk, and sing, and laugh at just the right times

The devil has lulled the world to sleep, and we need to make sure we're not asleep too. It was CH Spurgeon who said "This sleepiness in the Christian is exceedingly dangerous, because he can do a great deal while he is asleep that will make him look as if he were quite awake"

15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, Remember back in Ephesians 4:1 it tells us "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called..." And if we're going to walk in a worthy manner it requires us to watch our step.

It's important we "walk circumspectly," or a circle so that we're looking around, aware of what's going on around us, because the days are evil.

One of the reasons we don't walk circumspectly is that we're too busy. Haven't you ever felt a hostage by the tyranny of urgency-always busy. We get distracted.

A few years ago Kim and I flew to LAX and we landed at like 11:30 at night. I went to the rental car counter only to realize I booked a rental car in a different location, and couldn't get a car till the next day. It was a disaster. **SHOW PIC** Kim and I had to walk the streets around midnight, looking for a hotel, with no car. It was not fun. It was my fault, I was rushed and didn't walk circumspectly. **CLOSE PIC**

And this can happen in life... Without walking wisely we can waste time and money and effort to end up at a place in life we never intended?

The idea behind the phrase is to take advantage of opportunities. Make our time count.

16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. We “redeem the time” when we take advantage of the opportunities God gives us to share our faith, and serve our Lord, and love the people around us.

It’s been said “Time flies, but it’s up to you to be the pilot.”

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Here’s the ultimate test of where to step and how to spend time. Is it the will of God? We’ll walk wisely and redeem the time only to the degree we’re able to discern God’s will.

Yet for many believers this is the most ambiguous, and confusing area of Christian discipleship. We pray and pray, but how do we really know God’s will?

The best way to decipher the will of God is by understanding the Word of God. It’s filled with God’s will of what He wants us to do and what He wants us not to do, and the next several verses give us great examples.

18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, Verse 18 tells us, drunkenness is “dissipation.” The term means “wasteful.” Drinking to excess is sinful, foolish, harmful, and mainly wasteful.

The Bible is full of verses that warn us about alcohol.

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker,
Strong drink is a brawler,
And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

Proverbs 23:29 Who has woe?
Who has sorrow?
Who has contentions?
Who has complaints?
Who has wounds without cause?
Who has redness of eyes?

30 Those who linger long at the wine,
Those who go in search of mixed wine.

31 Do not look on the wine when it is red,
When it sparkles in the cup,
When it swirls around smoothly;

32 At the last it bites like a serpent,
And stings like a viper.

33 Your eyes will see strange things,
And your heart will utter perverse things.

Drunkenness is a waste of money... while the joy of the Spirit is free! It's a waste of health... think "liver disease." It's a waste of time... how can it be time well spent when you don't recall anything the next AM? Is this the best use of the short span we call "life?"

Drunkenness is wasteful, whereas the filling of the Holy Spirit is God's richest, fullest, highest blessing!

I've heard some Christians take this passage in Ephesians 5 as if Paul were making a comparison. As if being filled with God the Holy Spirit, and being stone-cold drunk are similar experiences.

Not at all! Paul's words are a contrast, not a comparison. "Do not be drunk with wine... but be filled with the Spirit."

Drunkenness and holiness are opposites.

Realize, alcohol is a depressant, not a stimulant. Booze deadens and mutes centers in the brain. A drunk acts giddy, and loses their inhibitions, because the alcohol depresses their normal defense mechanisms. Drunks lose their balance and their thinking becomes foggy.

Whereas the Holy Spirit's influence is a stimulant. To be filled with the Spirit is to be the best we can be. We grow stronger - think clearer - act wiser. The Spirit enhances our capacities.

The Bible tells us we need to be "filled with the Spirit!"

It's true that the Bible allows for the moderate use of alcohol. But not if you're a pastor or elder.

This is why it's so wrong when pastors are drinking and flaunting it. Could you imagine calling me in an emergency, and I can't

come to you b/c i'm tipsy? Or my speech is slurred as I'm trying to pray for you? God forbid!!

BTW i don't need alcohol to do what the HS can do.

Unlike alcohol, God's desire for us is to be overflowing with the HS, not moderation. No little doses - God wants His Spirit to get into the bloodstream - get carried into all parts of who we are.

Sadly I know Christians who are much more concerned with drinking the right amount of the right brand of alcohol, they get all excited over getting some drinks, yet show little interest in being filled with the HS.

Remember, the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer, but not all Christians allow Him to call the shots! The Bible tells us, "be filled with the Holy Spirit."

And here's where the Greek grammar is a huge help. This verb, "be filled," is continuous. (This is not a one time experience. It's a repeatable event. It's an on-going dynamic. We're filled over and over and over...)

The verb is also passive. We don't make this happen. We ask God, desire it, we're open to it - but we can't manufacture it ourselves.

The filling of the HS isn't the result of a formula we follow - or our reward for a good deed - the Spirit's filling is a gift of God's grace. It's God's work!

Notice the phrase, “be filled,” is imperative. This means it’s not a suggestion. It’s not optional. There’s nothing subtle here. Don’t live without the filling of the Spirit!

SHOW PIC In 1939 a beautiful float was on display during the tournament of roses parade.

The float was beautifully and carefully adorned on the outside. But as it traveled it began to struggle, and sputter, and lurch until it came to screeching halt on the route.

It was quickly discovered that the organizers of that float had forgot to fill it with gas.

But here’s the irony. The float was sponsored by the Standard Oil company. True story. A company with vast reservoirs of petrol had run out of gas. **CLOSE PIC**

And the same thing can happen to any Christian. We have a pipeline to Gods power, His name is the HS. We should never run out of gas spiritually speaking. We can ask God to continually fill us and empower us through His HS.

When a person drinks and drives, officers will pull them over and give them a field sobriety test. When a person is full of alcohol they lose control of their faculties... their speech, and mobility, and clarity.

But when a person is filled with the HS, their behavior will be affected by it!

God’s Spirit will tame the fiery temper, and put a lid on loose lips, and focus wandering eyes, and corral stray thoughts.

Here's the question for us this morning. If we were pulled over this and we took a test, would it be evident that we're under the influence of the HS? Here's how to tell...

19 speaking to one another (about politics, and inflation, and disaster preparation) **in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,** It's interesting, every bar or pub that you go to has either a jukebox, or a band or a DJ. Ever wonder why? It's because intoxication and singing go hand in hand. Today is St. Patrick's Day - and trust me, every bar around will be full of singing and making melody.

The guy who's sauced sings because he's "light-headed" - whereas the Spirit-filled person sings because they're "light-hearted." The burden has been lifted! The fullness of the Spirit turns worries into worship.

When we're filled with the Holy Spirit there's a song in our heart, and thanksgiving on our lips.

20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, It's possible to be thankful in all things when we recognize that God is at work in our lives for His glory and our good **Rom. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**

21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.[fn]

When we're filled with the Spirit, we're willing to be subject to other believers. We'll talk about this next time when we get into marriage

Think of Jesus' disciples after His resurrection, and all that His crew had going for them... They'd seen His miracles - even His victory over death. They were saved and dedicated. They left all to follow Jesus. And they were raring and ready to tell the world!

You'd think Jesus would seize the momentum and send these men out immediately right? But that's not what happened is it? Instead Jesus told them to return to Jerusalem and wait... Wait? Wait for what? Weren't they ready to go? According to today's standards, there's never been a group of people more ready to hit the mission field!

But Jesus knew they lacked a missing ingredient. They had yet to be filled with the Holy Spirit! We too, need to be filled with the Spirit - and not just once! But like the Ephesians we need to be filled again and again. Continuously filled with the Holy Spirit.

I'm gonna invite the worship team up

If you're a believer in Jesus, I'm not questioning whether you have the Holy Spirit. You do-He dwells in the heart of every Christian.

But don't you want to be filled? Feel His power? Know His fullness?

This is the Epi- which means upon or over, or overflow. It describes the HS flowing out of our lives.

Which means our lives then are not just a vessel containing the Spirit, but our lives become channels by which the HS flows from to impact the world around us.

And how does this happen? Again, it's not a result of our manipulations, or a reward for our righteousness. It's in God's heart to fill us with His Spirit! He just wants us to ask.

In Luke 11:9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 11 If a son asks for bread[fn] from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

We just gotta ask Him! So that's what we're gonna do.

As the worship team sings this next song, if you want a fresh filling of the HS, c'mon down right here while the song is playing, just come forward.