

**3/24/24 “Walk As Children of Light – Part 2”
Ephesians 5:11-14**

Welcome...

We are going through the book of Ephesians. Last week in Part 1 of walking as children of Light we saw three things:

How We Are to be Certain (in verses 5-7)

How We Are Changed (in verse 8)

How We Are to be Characterized (in verses 9-10)

Just because we are children of light does not guarantee that we will live that way. So Paul says, in effect, “Be what you are!” You are light; now, walk that way!” There is a root and fruit connection. If Jesus is rooted in your heart as your first love, then you will exhibit the fruit of verses 9-10...

This brings us to our text today.

Let’s read Ephesians 5:11-14...

People have different types of fears or phobias. You may have Acrophobia – the fear of heights. Agoraphobia – the fear of open spaces or crowds. Arachnophobia – the fear of spiders. Arithmophobia – the fear of numbers.

Nyctophobia is an extreme fear of the dark. The name comes from the Greek word for night. According to the Cleveland Clinic, Nyctophobia is an age-inappropriate fear of darkness that can prompt someone to limit their activities, avoid certain situations, and experience anxiety in anticipation of there being no light.

In our passage today, we are reminded of a phobia that is more spiritual in nature. We could call it photophobia – a fear of the light.

In John 3:19-21 Jesus said, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

As believers, we are called to walk as children of God’s Light. The fear of man can keep us from living unashamedly for Christ as well as lovingly and humbly confronting and correcting a brother or sister in Christ if they are walking in sin. A proper fear of God will guide us in keeping the right perspective and priorities “as children of light” so that we reveal God’s light in our daily lives by our character and conduct.

God’s light produces fruit; but light also exposes what is wrong. Rather than participating in the evil and barren deeds of darkness, our text today says we are to “expose them” (5:11). How do we do this?

Main point: In Ephesians 5:11-14 Paul continues with three more features of how Christians are to walk as children of light and glorify God.

How We Are Commanded in verse 11a

How We Are Commissioned in verses 11b-13

How We Are Called in verse 14

My prayer is that we each understand the will of God, that we know Christ and want to make Him known.

I. How We Are Commanded

Verse 11a ...

In verse 7 Paul instructed the believers in Ephesus not to be fellow participants with the evildoers, “the sons of disobedience,” and in this verse Paul tells them not to participate in their unfruitful works of darkness. The “unfruitful” works are in contrast to the fruit of the light in verse 9.

Unfruitful works are useless and unproductive and their source in “darkness” corresponds to the darkness in which the Ephesian believers once lived in verse 8. If the believers in Ephesus have been formerly darkness but are now light in the Lord, Paul is asking: why would they participate in the sins that come from the place to which they had previously been in bondage?

As those who have been rescued by Christ and transferred from darkness to light, we cannot withdraw from the world and unsaved friends, family, classmates and coworkers. But we must also resist the influence of the world. To do this we must live by the convictions God has given us from His Word. We cannot be like Mr. Talkative in Pilgrim’s Progress who prided himself on being adaptable to any kind of company and any kind of talk. He was like a chameleon who changes his color every time he changes his environment. Some of us have known people who had two vocabularies – one among Christians at church and another among their worldly associates at work or at school.

Have you ever gone to a restaurant where they must have loved darkness rather than light? You almost need a flashlight in order to read the menu. When the food comes you eat it by faith and not by sight. Gradually, however, you begin to make out objects a little more clearly. It is not that the light has increased, it is us getting used to the dark.

I think of the man named Lot in Genesis 19 who was a righteous man, but he moved into Sodom, and lived in it. While he did not agree with the Sodomites’ sinful deeds, he lost his influence with his family and had to flee for his life.

Modern-day Lots tell us that we should get close to the people of Sodom and get chummy with Gomorrah in order to convert them. Some who try to be like the world to reach those in the world end up merely getting used to the dark and participating in their unfruitful deeds of darkness.

Verse 11a says...

Christians who are to produce the righteous fruit of light are to have nothing at all to do with the unfruitful deeds of darkness. What are these unfruitful deeds of darkness? Some have already been mentioned in chapters 4 and 5—lusts of deceit, falsehood, stealing, unwholesome speech, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, malice, immorality, impurity, greed, filthiness, silly talk, coarse jesting, covetousness, and idolatry. Those and every other kind and degree of sin are to be avoided by the believer because they bring no benefit to man or glory to God.

We cannot witness to the world if we do not go out into the world. But we are not to become like the world and start living like we are in darkness. We must look to Jesus who, though He ate with tax collectors and sinners, was Himself “holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens” Hebrews 7:26.

Look at 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 with me, “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people, I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then

you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one[.]”

Christians are not to be isolated, but separated. We cannot avoid contact with sinners, but we can avoid contamination by sinners.

If a professed Christian is guilty of the sins named here in 1 Corinthians 5, the church must deal with him. Individual members are not to “fellowship” with him as if everything is normal. Instead, they are to prayerfully confront him and pray for him to be restored.

And this was Paul’s concern for the believers in Ephesus. Light reveals God; light produces fruit; but light also exposes what is wrong.

II. How We Are Commissioned

Verses 11-12...

What does the word “expose” mean? The same word used in other New Testament passages has two basic senses: The first is “to expose, to convict”

In Matt 18:15 Jesus said, “If your brother sins, go and show him (expose) his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”

In John 16:8 Jesus said, “And when the Holy Spirit comes, will convict (expose) the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”

The word expose is used similarly in 1 Cor 14:24; 2 Tim 4:2; Jas 2:9; Jude 15.

Secondly, the word “expose” also means “to reprove, rebuke” (Luke 3:19; 1 Tim 5:20; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:15; Heb 12:5; Rev 3:19).

Exposing in the New Testament included both convicting and rebuking. In the present context, the word is best translated as “expose” because the object of the imperative is not persons but works. In verse 9 Paul speaks of actions or works of goodness, righteousness, and truth (fruit of light), and in verse 10, believers are enjoined to discover actions or works that please the Lord. Both of these verses speak about good actions or works that are associated with Light.

Then in verse 13 Paul speaks of “all things or everything” and he does not use “everyone” is to be exposed by Light. Now in verse 11 Paul discusses the opposite kinds of actions or works, unfruitful works of darkness which must be exposed.

The question needs to be asked: “Whose deeds are to be exposed?” The professing believers or unbelievers? It is all too easy to conclude that it is the deeds of those in darkness. Nevertheless, it is more likely that it refers to believers who are participating in unfruitful works of darkness.

Because the context here is Paul speaking about believers. Paul exhorts believers not to participate in the works of darkness but rather to do the works or fruit of light. But it appears that some believers were participating in the works of darkness, making this imperative necessary.

In the New Testament there is no reprimand of those in the world. Rather, Paul exposes, rebukes, and disciplines those in the church (as Jesus outlined in Matthew 18:15–17). We saw in 1 Corinthians 5 that Paul explicitly states that believers are to judge those inside the church and not to judge those outside the church because God alone is going to judge the latter.

Believers, rather than participating in sin, are to help brothers and sisters in Christ who have fallen into sin by exposing their unfruitful works and showing them that participation in those works is totally inconsistent with light. In this respect, the Corinthians failed to expose the sin of incest that was practiced by one of the believers in the church in 1 Corinthians chapter 5.

Friends when we are silent about sin, we are guilty of encouraging it. When we ignore sin, we are guilty of promoting it.

Paul did not tell the Corinthians to remain silent; just live a good lifestyle and evil will disappear. No, to expose evil deeds includes verbal rebuke.

The reason for exposing their evil deeds in Ephesians 5 is given next in verse 12...

Darkness tries to conceal sins that should be exposed. We saw in Ephesians 4:19 that unbelievers sinned openly without shame. So, the reference to “in secret” here in 5:12 is referring to members of the church.

G Campbell Morgan wrote, “The church does the most for the world when the church is the least like the world.”

We are not to go about calling every single little sin out, but one of our problems is the fact that we don’t take sin seriously enough. We wink at it. We laugh about it. We see those around us who are engaged in sin, and we fail to confront. We just don’t take sin as seriously as we should.

Look at Galatians 6:1-2 with me...

Paul says that those who are spiritual should restore the wayward with a spirit of gentleness (6:1). In the body of Christ, believers care about and are therefore responsible for each other. When we see a brother or sister sliding downward into sin, we can’t simply turn away, hang our heads, and pretend it’s only the pastor’s responsibility to confront the wayward. Nor can we shake our fingers, roll our eyes, and add the person to our blacklist. Neither of these extremes is biblical. Paul explains how true spiritual care and restoration works.

First, restoration is necessary when a person is “caught” in sin. The language implies that the sinner, through weakness, has gotten himself or herself snared by the lures of the world. A fellow believer cares enough to reach out to them.

Second, Paul limits the intervention to those who are “spiritual.” These aren’t spiritual giants who have somehow eradicated their sin natures and are living miraculously pure lives. If we had to wait for a perfect saint to implement spiritual restoration, we would be waiting forever. Rather, in this context, the “spiritual” are those who, in a particular situation, have been given the spiritual mindset and relational vantage point to see the situation with moral clarity because they are not clouded by the fog that dulls the consciences of unrepentant sinners.

What does it mean to “restore”? The same word is used of a bone in the human body that is broken and needs to be reset or restored so the body can once again work properly and perform its vital functions for the benefit of the whole body.

In the context of restoring fallen believers, Paul links the term with one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit: gentleness. No wonder Paul says that only those who are spiritual can accomplish the difficult task of restoration!

You may know someone who's been lured into sin. You probably don't want the job, but God may be calling you to help him or her to get back to walking as a child of Light. Don't run from it, but at the same time don't be overly anxious to confront. If you are called to this task, carry it out with prayer, gentleness, and humility.

Back to Ephesians 5:13...

Verse 13 tells us how to handle sin. We handle sin by taking every action and exposing it to the light of the Word of God. We are to hold it up to the Bible, and if the Bible is against it, we are to be against it too. If the Bible is for it, we are to be for it. The Word of God alone is to be the standard for our lives.

When I was in the Middle East I went to some shops to get some items to bring back. But the shops had no windows, they were built side-by-side on narrow streets and were quite dark inside. To get a good look at what I was buying I had to take the merchandise out into the sunshine. In that bright light, I could see the item for what it really is, and any flaws and imperfections will be obvious.

We are called to walk as children of light. Jesus said in John 3:20 when He said, "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." He continues 3:21, "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

In other words, by the obvious difference in how we live to please Christ, our lives expose the sin of those who are engaging in the unfruitful deeds of darkness.

Notice what Paul says in verse 13, "But all things become visible when they are exposed [same word] by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light." That last phrase is difficult, but Paul seems to be arguing that light not only exposes, but also transforms (at least some of the time).

J. B. Phillips paraphrased it this way, "It is even possible (after all, it happened with you!) for light to turn the thing it shines upon into light also."

I can usually recognize someone who lives on a ranch or some acreage because their cars get covered with dust and as long as they are with other ranchers the cars or trucks all look the same, so we don't think much about it. But then you come to into town to do some shopping and suddenly are surrounded by clean cars! Those clean cars expose how dirty the rancher's car or truck is.

Paul is saying our clean lives expose the sin of believers' lives and the sins of unbelievers. God may use this contrast in calling them drives them to get their sins washed at the cross.

We have seen How We Are Commanded and How We Are Commissioned

III. How We Are Called

Verse 14...

Is verse 14 written to believers or unbelievers?

Charles Spurgeon writes, “The context is believers, and although they may not be spiritually dead in the sense in which the unbeliever is, yet how often do we speak of ourselves as feeling as if we were dead, they in such a slumber that it turns into a cold state.”

Paul concludes this section with verse 14:

“Wake up, O sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

We do not know whom Paul is quoting here. Most likely it cites an early Christian hymn based on Isaiah 60:1, “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.”

Whatever its origin, Paul’s application is clear. Some people who are “light in the Lord” are slumbering and need to wake up. It is an obvious fact that Christians who are asleep do not know it, they are just going through the motions.

That is why Paul says, “Wake up, O sleeper!”

If we are light we must act as light, manifesting its brilliant functions, both positive and negative. We must live out the fruit of “goodness” and “righteousness” and “truth,” and we must at times “expose ... the fruitless deeds of darkness.”

Then comes the reward in verse 14, “and Christ will shine on you.”

Notice that there are only 2 options - choose to follow Christ and walk in His light or refuse to follow Christ and walk in darkness! Whether the recipients of the command to “Arise” are believers or unbelievers, the result is the same for those who hear and obey the command - they will receive the “light of life.”

In other words, you will be enabled by the Spirit of Christ to live a life filled with light rather than darkness. This is a fruitful life in which one's joy is filled to the brim by Christ's Spirit.

So, how well is God’s light shining through the lamp of your life? How often is it accomplishing its purposes? Does your presence in this world make a difference in your home, your school, or your occupation?

Do you have a vibrant witness that draws people to your Savior, or do you hide your light under a basket and save it just for church on Sunday (Matthew 5:15)?

Does your joy in Christ, your concern for others, and your integrity prick the consciences of other believers who may be sliding into darkness?

One final question: Would you have to admit that sin has crept in and begun to extinguish whatever light remains in your witness?

Our mission is to know Christ and make Him known. The Lord genuinely desires to use you. So, if sin has dimmed His light in your life, take time now to confess it to Him and seek His cleansing and forgiveness. But don’t stop there. Ask Him to kindle anew His flame within you so your light will shine brilliantly and consistently.

We all may have different phobias. But there is one fear we all must have. David prayed in Psalm 86:11, “give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name.” David prayed in Psalm 27, “The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?”... And in

Psalm 27:4 he prayed that he might dwell in the house of the Lord to behold His beauty and to seek Him in His temple.

Paul prayed in Ephesians 3:16-19 that the Ephesian Christians might be able to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

If we are committed to the practice of godliness, our prayer life will reflect it. We will be regularly asking God to increase our fear of Him, to deepen our understanding of His love for us, and to heighten our desire for His fellowship. I encourage you to put those three verses, or similar passages, on our list of prayer requests and pray over them regularly so that we have the proper fear of God and we will walk as children of Light.

Let's pray...