

CHILDREN OF LIGHT EPHESIANS 5:8-14

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

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

For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”

There is a fire that's been burning in the Blue Ridge Mountains for the last 200 years. It was originally started in a log cabin by a man named, *Tom Dalton*, in with just a flint and a piece of steel. Since that time the flame has moved from cabin to cabin, as generation after generation of Daltons have kept the light alive.

It's now the oldest continuous fire in the US.

Family members say it takes enormous effort to keep the fire burning. In the summer the fire consumes a cord of wood each month. Yet the fire burns on because the Daltons remain [faithful to the flame!](#)

Two hundred years is a long time to keep a light lit, but what if I told you of a fire that's been burning not 200, but 2000 years - *a flame that's never flickered!*

Jesus lit a fire on the Day of Pentecost. Tongues of fire were seen dancing over the heads of His disciples.

The Good News of Jesus started a blaze, that's been on the move every since. From cabin to cabin - and from generation to generation - Christians have kept the fire burning by *“walking as children of light.”*

And at times it's not been easy. Enormous sacrifices and effort have gone into keeping the fire ablaze.

Men like Hugh Latimer, the early English reformer, was burned at the stake for his faith in Jesus. Latimer offer up his own body to keep the torch aflame.

While tied to a burning post, Latimer shouted with his dying breath, *“We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England, as I trust shall never be put out.”* And it never has been! It's still burning brightly.

Today, godly men and women still glow as lights for the Lord. They shine brightly! They kept the flame lit!

And we too are called to be *faithful to the flame!*

In Matthew 5:14-16 Jesus tells His disciples both then and now, *“You are the light of the world... 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 study that calling!

The first seven verses of Ephesians 5 teach us how to **walk in love**, even in the midst of a lust-filled world.

Now, the next seven verses instruct us to **walk as light** in the darkness. You and I are *“children of light.”*

Paul begins his exhortation in verse 8, *“For you were once darkness...”* Notice, before we came to Jesus, we didn't just *walk in darkness*, Paul says *“(we) were once darkness.”* Our lives were characterized by *darkness*.

It's interesting how the dictionary defines this word. *Look it up... “darkness”* means *“the absence of light.”*

Rather than understood by *what it is* and *what it possesses*. It's defined by *what it's not* or *what it lacks*.

This to me is important. We like to attach all kinds of characteristics to *darkness*. We play eery organ music. We peer through the thick fog, and willow trees, and graveyard... that's where we'll find *“the darkness!”*

Or we think of darkness as what's violent, vulgar, voyeuristic, sensual, greedy, profane, pornographic...

But these are all by-products of darkness. These are evils that latch on to a person while they're in the dark.

It's like walking into a dark basement.

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.*

But the darkness itself is simply *an absence of light*.

Spiritually speaking, this means a person can be religious, and kind, and nice, and full of good works, *yet still be in the dark!* Spiritual darkness is also, *simply the absence of God's light*. All kinds of evil may attach itself to our darkness, but a person is *darkness, and in the dark*, for one reason - they lack God's fire and light.

In 1 Timothy 6:15 the Scripture refers to God as *"the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen."*

Paul tells us that God dwells in *"unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see."* God is not only light. He's the brightest light. He's like the sun.

Peer at our sun for more than a few seconds and it'll blind you. So it is with God. His brilliance is too intense for human eyes. He *"dwells in unapproachable light."*

In July 2010 astronomers from the University of Sheffield in England announced they had found what is believed to be the brightest star ever discovered. Not even a welding shield could enable you to gaze on it.

This star, ingloriously named R136a, has a mass 265 times greater than our sun. It's surface temperature is 7 times hotter. It's luminosity is 9 million times brighter.

Imagine a star not twice as bright as our sun in the sky - or even 10 times as bright, or a hundred times, or a thousand times, or even a million times brighter...

But a sun 9 million times brighter than our sun. We all want to ask... *How can anything be that bright?*

Yet this isn't even a fraction of God's luminosity. The brightness of His light and glory is "unapproachable."

In fact, John in his Gospel mentions this same truth. John 1:18 tells us, "No one has seen God at any time." If human eyes, *unshaded*, saw God we would be fried.

But John follows that thought with another, "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." The only way to see the blinding light of God's holiness, is through His Son, Jesus.

This is why Jesus said in John 12:45, "He who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness." Jesus is "God in see-able form."

He's the digestible God. He's all that God is - in all His brilliance - but through the lens of grace and mercy.

That makes it simple, the person without Jesus is darkness, while those in Christ are "children of light."

As verse 8 put it, "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light..."

There's a common illustration that as the moon is to the sun, so is the relationship of the Christian to God. Our light is not of our own. We simply reflect God.

A famous preacher, Donald Barnhouse, took the illustration one step further. He said that at times in the history of the church, her witness has been like a full moon - bold and bright - it's filled up the night sky.

Whereas at other times, it's been like a crescent moon - *there and shining*, but just a slither of a moon.

In short, we've "*walked as children of light*" to varying degrees of success. Church history is like the phases of the moon. We've fluctuated between brighter and dimmer - fuller and thinner - but we've always shined.

But this idea of the Christian as a moonbeam - a mere reflection of God's light - is only partially true.

Here's a better illustration... Think of a glow-in-the-dark frisbee. Put the disc in a car's headlamp, let it soak up the light - then watch it glow on its own.

And likewise, God makes us fluorescent!

We don't just *reflect* the light like a mirror - we actually hold the light within, then *radiate* it to others.

It's like the man who found an antique matchbox at a garage sale. It was suppose to light up in the dark.

He gave it to his wife as a present. But the wife was disappointed, until she noticed some writing on the side. It was in French, so she got a friend to translate.

It read, "*If you want me to shine in the night, then keep me in the light.*" And this is the principle that works in you and me. We don't just mirror the light, we fellowship with Jesus, then shine the light we absorb.

This is another way of thinking about walking in light.

But here's the best illustration... Like the Dalton's fire in the Blue Ridge Mountains,

embrace Jesus as your Lord, and the Spirit of God will move the light Jesus shined on Earth, into the furnace of your heart.

The light of God that we shine isn't just light we've absorbed - it's light that's generated by God within us.

The human heart is combustible. When God puts His Holy Spirit in us we catch fire, and give off His light.

When God first created life in the universe, His Spirit hovered over the darkness and the chaos. That's when God spoke, "Let there be light and there was light."

And a similar miracle occurs in every believing heart.

God's first work in us, as in the universe, is to hover 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!

2 Corinthians 4:6 compares God's first stroke of creation, with His new creation in us. "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 - go from "in the dark" to "in the light." Salvation is more than moving to a lighted room... Something happens deep in me. God turns on a switch in my heart.

I'm transformed from "darkness to light."

God moves His fire into the fireplace of my heart! Ever notice, “heart” and “hearth” are the same word.

And this enables us to not just shine for a few hours, until the glow wears off, and the shine starts to cease.

No! it equips us to “*walk as children of light*” in a dark world - in the midst of evils that breed in dark places.

Remember the story of Moses... Exodus 33:18 tells us Moses asked God, “Please, show me your glory?”

God obliged, *to a point*. He sat Moses in a cave, and sheltered His eyes with His hand, and allowed Moses to see His back. And when Moses descended from the mountain his face glowed with light - with God’s glory.

Moses had the opposite of a 5 o’clock shadow. His face was illuminated with the light of the eternal God.

And Paul picks up this story in 2 Corinthians 3. He mentions *the Mo-glow*. It was amazing, but temporary.

In contrast, Paul says of people who are in Christ - who have received His Spirit - God’s glory isn’t a passing fancy, we’re being transformed into His glory.

As a result, God’s light now shines through us.

The light of God’s purity and presence - His brilliance and beauty - now shines *from and through* your life.

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 through whom the light shines through!" That's Paul's definition in verse 8.

For just as it's not enough for us to know God's love, we also should "*walk in love*" - likewise, it's not enough to just have the light of God, we also need to "*walk as children of light...*" and this has ethical implications...

We're told in verses 8-9, "*walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.*"

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?... We're choosing to *walk in the light* or *hide in the shadows!*

People like to think of light and darkness in a strictly spiritual or emotional sense... *as being enlightened?*

But you can't contemplate light and dark long before it takes a moral turn. Goodness happens in the light, whereas evil and sinful deeds fester in the darkness.

Ask any police officer and they'll tell you most crimes happen at night, under the cover of darkness. I always told my kids, "*Nothing good happens after midnight.*"

Thus, *“walking in the light”* effects my character.

This is why Paul mentions the three divine rays that blend together to make up God’s light... *“goodness”* to others, *“right-ness”* before God, and *“truth”* in all things!

Generosity, and *integrity*, and *reliability* are the three beams in God’s flashlight - values that shine His light.

And if we walk as *“children of light”* these are three traits that we’ll prioritize in how we live and love and do business. Our *generosity*, our *integrity*, our *reliability* - is what attracts people to the Jesus that we preach.

Once a tragic automobile accident occurred when a carload of teenagers were struck by a train and killed.

That night a crossing guard was on duty. His job was to walk into the intersection and wave his lantern to warn any cars of the oncoming train. After the accident this man was placed on trial for negligent homicide.

On the witness stand the guard was asked, *“Were you at the crossing the night of the accident?”* *“Yes, I was.”* *“Were you waving your lantern?”* *“Yes, I was.”*

Long after the trial the crossing guard was overheard confessing, *“I’m glad I was never asked if there was a light in my lantern. Because the light had gone out.”*

And this is the problem with the witness of many Christians. We’re waving our lanterns, but there’s no light - no *generosity*, *integrity*, *reliability* in our lives, and as a result no one is inclined to listen to what we say.

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 love how Paul refers to “*goodness, righteousness, and truth*” as “*fruit!*” This is what a hungry man can sink his teeth into - not *empty words*, but *love in action*.

People don’t want leaves or bark, they want fruit.

It reminds me of the three day Bible conference. Great sermons were preached. On the last day a man responded to the altar call, and gave his life to Jesus.

Afterwards, someone ask him, “Which of the pastors who spoke this week compelled you to come forward?”

The man was startled. He replied, “It wasn’t any pastor’s preaching, it was my co-worker's practicing.”

Recently, Yahoo Sports, ran a story on Georgia Football Coach, Mark Richt. In the article the author made an amazing comment. *And I quote, "There isn't any way to separate Mark Richt the football coach and Mark Richt the Christian. They are one in the same. Always."* Then he went on to give several examples.

But what a powerful affirmation of a man’s character. Integrity is being what you say you are all the time.

Think what you will about Coach Richt, but what the article says of him is what I hope can be said of us...

You’ll never find any separation between *Bob the salesman* and *Bob the Christian...* or between *Mary the office manager* and *Mary the Christian...* or between *Sam the*

banker and Sam the Christian...

This is what *“walking as children of light”* looks like in a person. *No foggy identities - or misty motives - or gray areas of morality... No shadowlands to which a person escapes when their stressed and pressured...*

This man or woman is a child of God, and they are what they say they are - all the time - in every situation.

People today are searching for answers. And they're open to the Gospel... *But you say, “Folks I talk to aren't open. They scoff and say they've heard it all before.”*

But that's the problem - they've *heard* the Gospel, but they've never *seen it lived out*. And that's the Gospel they're searching for, and would interest them.

It reminds me of the Chinese farmer who went to a missionary compound to have cataract surgery. The procedure was successful, but the man left town for many months. When he finally returned, he was pulling a rope... and holding on to the rope was a string of blind men who had all come for the very same surgery.

The best witness for the Gospel is a changed life.

I hope you know, your life *is* an advertisement for the Gospel... but what if we put you on television? *How many calls would we receive for more information?*

Listen to this poem... *“You are writing a Gospel, a chapter every day, by deeds that you do, by words that you say. Men read what you write, whether faithless or true. Say! What is the gospel according to YOU?”*

When we walk as *“children of light”* there are two results... *We prove what's good*

and expose what's evil. Verse 11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."

I heard of a lazy housekeeper who once complained, "My house would stay clean and uncluttered if people didn't keep opening windows and letting in the light."

It's only in the light that we see the dust and stains.

When the light of Jesus comes flooding in, it causes us to see how *dirty* and *in disarray* our life has become.

When you came to Christ, the Spirit of God opened your eyes to [the love of God](#), [the truth of God](#), and [the glory of God](#). It's a thrill to have spent your whole life in the dark - then suddenly, the lights and heat come on.

It reminds me of Norena. After Hurricane Katrina hit it was discovered she had no electricity in her home. She was getting by with a small lamp and a single burner. It took an electrician just a few hours to restore power.

But here's the stunning wrinkle in her story. Norena's problems were found after Hurricane Katrina, *but they didn't start there*. She'd been living without power since Hurricane Andrew, which struck South Florida in 1992.

Norena had received an insurance settlement to repair damage from Andrew, but when the money ran out so did her contractor. The work was never finished.

It's amazing this woman had lived in the dark for 15 years... No air-conditioning... Not one hot shower in 15 years. When CBS news interviewed Norena, she said, "[It's hard to describe having the electricity to switch on... It's overwhelming.](#)" She said she planned on letting the water get real hot, and taking a bubble bath.

Norena's 15 years in the dark were not her choice, yet I know folks who've deliberately spent decades in darkness. They're more comfortable in the dark. If you want to hide the best place to be is in the darkness.

One man confessed, "I prefer darkness over light. The darkness allows me to hide who I am and what I truly feel. In the light all things have a chance to be revealed Darkness makes it easier to hide.

In the dark you can't see what is coming next... The darkness is a place where you can lose yourself. Lost in the dark is a great place to be, because then you are free from what you were and can be what you want."

A person can hide his sin and shame in the dark. Excuses and rationalizations flourish in dark corners.

As long as you're in the dark, you don't have to deal with the sins that aren't seen. But once you come out into the light everything changes. Sin gets exposed.

Attitudes you harbored in the dark are viewed as rebellion in the light... Little compromises you justified in the darkness are seen as hideous, in the light... In the dark certain habits were deemed innocent, but now in the light they're recognized as a deadly cancer...

During the winter, northern cities use lots of salt to clear the roads of ice and snow. After a time a mixture of exhaust, salt, and snow gets plastered onto the sides of cars. All the cars end up looking a murky-gray.

But on the first warm, spring day some fellow will wash his car and restore it to its

original color.

When everyone else on the block 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.

But this is where the conflict arises... When you're sound asleep and somebody flips on the lights, *what's your reaction?* Well, it's not pleasant, or welcoming...

The light can be nuisance - an unwanted intruder.

There're three ways people respond to the light...

First, people **attack**. They hit back. They get angry at you for disturbing their comfort and their slumber.

Second, people **avoid**. They try to avoid you. They'll pull a pillow over your head and hope you go away.

Third, some people **appreciate**. They'll thank you for waking them. They didn't realize it was Daylights Savings Time, and they had to get up an hour early.

But realize, whether they **attack**, **avoid**, or **appreciate** doesn't relinquish us from our calling to shine the light.

Paul tells us to *"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness..."* Don't get **entangled** with the habits and practices of this world, rather **expose** them.

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?*

Just don't blend in. Don't mesh your lifestyle with the world's lifestyle. Don't adopt their values and priorities.

We need to shine our light, but when we do let's make sure the contrast is sharp and clear and decisive.

Too many Christians today, rather than "*children of the light,*" they've become "*children of the twilight.*"

They've caved, compromised, capitulated. They've worked hard to blend in, not stick out. And now a "*child of light*" is barely distinguishable from this dark world.

Rather than live in the bright light of the Son of God, some Christians exist in a dim twilight of compromise.

Be careful when you as a Christian bargains with this world. It reminds me of the hunter stalking a bear.

He finally had the bear in the sights of his rifle, and was just about to pull the trigger, when the bear spoke up... He asked if the hunter would negotiate. Well, the hunter was so surprised at a talking bear, he agreed.

The bear said, "*I want a full stomach.*"

The hunter replied, "*I want a fur coat.*"

After hours of negotiations, they both got what they wanted... yet the bear was the only one to walk away.

He got a full stomach and the hunter got a fur coat.

And the moral of the story is beware of compromise! Negotiate with this world and expect to get taken.

We need to *expose* evil, not get *entangled*.

Verse 12 tells us, “For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.”

There’s two ways to bring shame to yourself...

One way is to commit a shameful act. The other is speak casually of another person’s shameful acts.

It’s like the guy who shares an hour-long testimony.

He goes on and on for 59 minutes detailing every despicable evil and wicked detail of his past life. Then with his final minute he tosses in that Jesus’ saved him.

Don’t even talk about what’s shameful!

I’ve heard Christian testimonies that ended up an advertisement for the devil. The guy recounting the story inadvertently promotes the sin from which he was supposedly saved. He glamorizes sin - not the Savior.

We drive out the darkness not by [studying the darkness...](#) You don’t have to surf the web to learn of all the evils that are on the internet. *That’s a quick way to get in serious trouble...* An over-active curiosity will subject you to an endless pipeline of lethal sewage.

Too many guys have been trapped by curiosity.

If my goal is to clean you up, I don’t need to study the slime you’ve been in... *All I*

need is a bar of soap.

Neither do we dispel the darkness by **discussing it...** or even **fighting it...** If you want to wake up someone who's in the darkness - *just turn on the light!*

That's what verse 13 tells us, **"But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light."** What a dark world needs most is not condemnation, *but for us to walk in light!*

Prisoners of darkness need "the children of light."

Verse 14 quotes an ancient chorus. In my Bible it's formatted as poetry. Scholars believe it was a liturgy. Perhaps, employed by Paul as a baptismal song.

"Therefore He says (He being Isaiah. Paul is quoting from Isaiah 26:19): **"Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."** You and I, **"children of light,"** need to be wide awake spiritually!

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... and sing in your sleep... and laugh in your sleep... even smile and nod to the pastor while you're asleep! And the same is true of spiritually 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.

Author Kent Hughes puts it, **"It is possible to live a dreamy life of unreality in the nether land of inaction."**

You can say all the right words and still be asleep!

Christian musician, Keith Green, wrote a song titled, "*Asleep in the Light.*" Here're the soul-searching lyric...

"The world is sleeping in the dark, that the church just can't fight, because its asleep in the light. How can we be so dead, when we've been so well fed. Jesus rose from the grave, and we can't even get out of bed."

A battle rages around us. We need to *tune in* to the issues that matter to God. The devil has lulled the world to sleep. *It's the church that needs to wake up!*

We can't afford to be "asleep in the light."

Remember the downfall of General David Petraeus. Someone characterized it as "hubris meets high tech."

Petraeus was a retired four star general and acting director of the CIA when adultery with his biographer became front page news. He was outed by email.

An article in the Washington Post warned, "There are no true secrets in the modern world. Privacy is an illusion... Every communication is potentially public.

Like the gift of fire, technology is a magical device that, if not used carefully, contains the seeds of our own destruction... E-mails and texts can be forwarded, archived, retrieved. The veil of anonymity is fragile"

And Christians of all people shouldn't be surprised.

Let me read verse 13 one more time, "*But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light...*"

The light of God shines into every corner. There is no crack or crevasse into which God's light doesn't shine.

There's nowhere in the universe where you can hide from God's all-seeing eye, and inescapable gaze.

This is why we all need to come out of the darkness and into God's light... Open up to the Spirit of God.

Cultivate the fruits of [goodness](#), [integrity](#), [reliability](#)...

Refuse to live in the twilight of compromise, and live in the bright light of God's presence. It's time for all of us who name the name of Jesus to wake up! Let's be faithful to the flame! Let's walk as *"children of light."*