

Sermon Title: Walk As Children Of Light
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:7-14 (Ephesians #34)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 4-24-22

I would like you to please join me at Ephesians Chapter 5, where today we plan to look at Verses 7 through 14.

I want to emphasize to you that as we talk about this and we look at a command to "walk as children of Light," this is *not* about how to be a Christian! This *presupposes* that you are "in Christ"; remember, that's the theme of Ephesians: the theme-phrase is "in Christ"; it occurs 27 times.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 are primarily doctrinal, and tell you how to *be* "in Christ"—"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (1:4), we have come to Him "by grace... through faith" (2:8), we were "dead in our trespasses and sins" (2:1), and we have been "made alive together with" Him (2:5). (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted) So, when you get to Chapters 4, 5, and 6, it is *presupposing* that you are "in Christ"; and it's telling you: "Here is how you need to live as an 'ambassador' of the Kingdom of Heaven (2 Cor. 5:20) while you still live in this world" (cf. Phil. 2:15).

Now, *this* passage—and, really, the ones before it, but this one in a special way—has to do with how we impact the world around us. And my friends, we are living in a time of rather rapid transition in our world. Most people in America who know Christ don't really have a perspective of what it is like to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ in most places in most times in the history of the Church. We have had it *so good!* For the first 225 or 230 years of our nation, we had sort of an ambient culture-wide awareness of a Christian worldview, and it was *accepted* that people go to church. We have this unusual concept of "freedom of religion," where we don't shoot people who believe the "wrong" things, and we don't throw them in jail, and we don't expel them from the country, and things like that.

But that's changing. We are starting to catch up with the rest of the world. Christians—the ones who truly belong to Christ, and don't just *say*, "I'm a Christian." When I was a kid, I figured, "Well, I'm a Christian because I'm not one of the Jewish kids who get two extra holidays in the fall," so I knew I wasn't Jewish; and, "I know I'm not Muslim, I'm not Hindu—I'm obviously a Christian!" I didn't know *at all* what it meant to be a Christian until I heard the Gospel; but I lived in this milieu where a president would give a speech, and he would quote the Bible—and we *expected* that. And that isn't necessarily *evangelical*—evangelistic—but we had a *worldview* that accepted that.

Well, my friends, this is *not* the country that our grandparents grew up in—not in *many* ways. And we need to be diligent to live in a manner that Ephesians 4:1 calls "worthy of the calling with which you have been called" if we are going to reach people in our world.

And *that's* our goal, that's our purpose. People are "*lost*" (Lk. 19:10)! We are not here to try to win back a culture to being a "Christian" culture! We were *never* a "Christian" culture. We were always a culture that had more of a sense of a Christian worldview than any other worldview; but it's not the culture that is lost, it's the *people* that are lost—and we need to bring people to Christ, by God's grace.

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Back in our parents' day—at least, *my* parents' day—it was assumed that people got married, and *then* they lived together; how quaint is *that* idea now? The vast majority of people attended church in prior generations in America. People actually thought that you needed a husband and a wife to have a baby, back in those days. When I was a kid, "Coke" was a soft-drink! "Pot" was a cooking utensil. *Aides* helped out the President. LGBTQ was a *terrible* draw when you were playing Scrabble. How things have changed.

Now, our society's long-standing presuppositions of "normal" and "right" and "wrong"—they've been abandoned. Now, instead of "right and wrong," the primary driving force for most people's decisions about most things is: "What will contribute to my personal peace and affluence? How do I *feel* about doing this?" Not, "Is it right or wrong," but, "How do I feel?" And we have allowed, in this time, as our society has begun eroding so fast and changing so fast, we have—as the Christians in this world; as the Church, "the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:2), that same entity that He has been building ever since it was born in the days of the Apostles (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47)—we have created a rather one-way valve that is allowing the thinking of the world to flow into the Church, and not allowing very much of what is going on with the true Church to flow into the world. Our passage is going to tell us *how to make it flow!* Here is what we are supposed to do when we *go out of* these doors, and enter into the world.

You see, "church" is not merely a fortress that we can run to and hide in and be safe from our enemies. Now, don't get me wrong: it's *great* to be together with likeminded people, and not be *challenged* at every front. The fellowship of the saints is a wonderful, special, unique thing, but we need to remember that we are not just that place where we can come and hide from the world; we're not just an oasis in the desert. *This is the command center* from which we need to train and send well-equipped troops to take the message into the world. This is the supply depot from which we get our ammunition of truth, and we apply it in love in the world. We need to *reverse* that one-way valve, and penetrate the world. And our passage before us in Ephesians is all about that. If we are going to maintain spiritual potency, this is going to tell us what to do.

In a sense, it's just a reiteration of a theme that we've already been seeing. Chapter 4 started with: "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." And then, as we've moved on from there: remember, Chapters 1, 2, and 3—primarily doctrinal, telling you how be in Christ; now, now that you *are* in Christ: "walk worthy." Well, this walk of the "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17), the "new man" (Eph. 4:24, LSB), is described in the first 16 Verses of Chapter 4 as a walk in "unity" (vs. 4); we *are* "one body" in Christ (vs. 4); we *are* "members of one another" (vs. 25), we belong together; we are a *unit* (Rom. 12:5).

Then, Verses 17 through 24 tells us: as we walk, we are to walk like the "new creatures" that we are in Christ. Remember this terminology? We are to "put off...the old man" (4:22, NKJV)—get rid of the "old man," the old ways of thinking; have our minds "renewed" by the Word of God (vs. 23); and then, "put on the new man" (vs. 24)—replace those old habits with the habits of "the new man" in Christ.

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The emphasis from Verse 25 through Verse 32 in Chapter 4 was about "walking in truth" (2 Jn. 4; 3 Jn. 3)—again, *that's* the nature of the "new man."

Then we entered Chapter 5—no change of subject, no change of theme; we are told there to "walk in love" (vs. 2), as we are loved in Christ.

So our passage today—Verses 7 through 14 in Chapter 5—is the next step in this "walking" theology of the "new man." "Walking" is the metaphor for your lifestyle, for the manner in which you live (e.g., Rom. 6:4; 8:4; 14:15; 1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 4:2; Gal. 5:25). And the theme here is: Walk in Light, as "you are Light in the Lord" (vs. 8). This passage outlines itself; you would be committing a crime against the text if you didn't observe this. There are two contrasting pairs here: Verses 7 through 10—Don't Be Partakers, But Walk as Children of Light; and then the other pair in Verses 11 through 14—Don't Participate, But Expose.

So let's look at this now, starting at Verses 7 and 8. Don't Be Partakers, But Walk as Children of Light. Paul writes: "Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light."

Now, I want to point out to you again that that word "be" in Verse 7 is that word we've seen several times lately. In the Greek, it's actually a form of the word "become"; it's a warning to Christians against living by those old habits (cf. 1 Pet. 1:14). By our new nature, we are *not* "partakers with" the things of the world; so, he's saying literally, "Stop *becoming* joint partakers with them."

The "them" is those people that are committed to those ugly things that he has described before this (cf. 1 Pet. 4:1-3). Go back to Verse 3: We should not be partakers with those who participate in—there was that list: "immorality, impurity, greed, filthiness, silly talk, or coarse jesting."

So he says: "You were formerly darkness." That's *one* of the many ways that the New Testament describes a person who is *not* "in Christ"; this is how the Bible describes an unregenerate person, an unsaved person, a lost man or woman (e.g., Prov. 2:13; 4:19; Is. 9:2; Matt. 4:16; 6:23; Jn. 3:19; 12:46; Acts 26:18; Rom. 1:21; Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 5:4-5; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Jn. 1:6; 2:9). And used in that way, "darkness" describes spiritual or moral darkness, the intellectual failure to perceive the truth about God and Christ and salvation; blindness to truth; it's being wrapped up in evil works and evil powers. "Darkness" is even used as a place of punishment in the New Testament (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; 2 Pet. 2:4, 17; Jude 13), and those who are in the darkness are described as the darkness itself. So in other words, "darkness" describes people who are lost; they are depraved (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10). They are not only lost, they can't help themselves (Prov. 20:9; Jer. 13:23; Jn. 6:44, 65), and they are blind to the truth (1 Cor. 2:14).

Now, on the other side, "light" is what enables you to see (Eph. 5:13). Apart from light, you cannot discern shape or color, and you cannot perceive truth (Lk. 2:32; Jn. 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 11:10; 12:36, 46; Acts 13:47; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; Eph. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:10).

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That word that is translated "light" is one of those Greek words that you almost know, if you knew it had a Greek root to it; the Greek word is *phōs*—from which we get photon, photograph, all of those things. It doesn't describe a lamp or a star or a fire; it describes the essence of light itself (cf. Gen. 1:3). "Light" dispels "darkness" (Jn. 1:5; cf. Mic. 7:8; Jn. 8:12), and light reveals—exposes—whatever it touches.

Now, there is a subtle and important little bit of wording here, and I want you to catch it. Notice he says: "Do not be partakers with them"—and here's the one I want to point you to—"for you *were* formerly darkness, but now you *are* Light..." He didn't say, "You were *in* darkness, and now you are *in* Light." Is that true? Yes, it is. Apart from Christ, you were "in darkness" (Jn. 12:46). In Christ, you are "in light" (Col. 1:12). But he's taking it a step further: You used to *hide* things, but now you *reveal* them. You *were* darkness, now you *are* Light. Does that bring to your mind the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:14-16—"You are the light of the world...Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

The source of this light is the Lord; He is the "Light" of "every man" (Jn. 1:9). The source of the light is the Lord; so, to be the light, you need to be "in the Lord" (cf. Rom. 16:11)—your position "in Christ"; you are actually light in a world of darkness, since you are now a Christian (Phil. 2:15). So what? Well, that means that as we walk in this world—as we live among the darkness—we are "children of Light." This is just another way of saying what he has been saying ever since Chapter 4, Verse 17—that we need to live *consistently* with who we are in Christ (cf. Rom. 6:4; Col. 3:1-2). We are the *offspring* of "the Light of the world," who is Jesus (Jn. 8:12).

When you have been "cleansed" in Christ (Eph. 5:26; cf. Acts 15:9; Heb. 9:14; 1 Jn. 1:7), you don't want to run out and jump back into the cesspool from which you've been pulled and cleaned; that's now foreign territory to you. I like the way Peter described it when he wrote to his friends, in Second Peter Chapter 1, Verse 9; he has listed a whole bunch of character qualities that go with being a believer in Jesus Christ, and then he says: "For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins" (cf. Jas. 1:22-24). Ephesians 5 is saying: Don't forget what you have been purified from! "You *were* darkness, *now* you're light! Let your light shine. Walk as children of Light."

The next verse in Ephesians 5 is parenthetical; he says: "(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)" (vs. 9). How do you know whether you are walking as a child of Light? Well, there will be "fruit" where there is "Light." There will be "fruit" if you are one of the "branches" that is connected to the "vine," which is Jesus Christ (Jn. 15:5). When light is present, there is *evidence* of the light; and he gives you three examples here, three of the many Christ-like qualities that characterize a Christian who is walking in the light: "Goodness"—that's the opposite of causing pain or malice. "Righteousness"—that means right behavior, doing what is right in God's eyes; it's the opposite of injustice. "Truth"—that means integrity, reliability; it's the opposite of hypocrisy.

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So he says: "The fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth." Now, I want you to see the next verse in light of the whole sentence, so I'm going to read to you from Verse 7 all the way through the next verse, Verse 10—"Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), *trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*" That's the end of this sentence that goes four verses.

Now, "trying to learn," in my humble opinion, is not the best translation in the context. The word that is translated "trying to learn" literally means: "to put to the test for the purpose of approving; to validate that something is what it is supposed to be." This is the word that is used, for example, if you are mining for gold and you find something, and you're pretty sure it's gold; you have to go have it "assayed," right? They put it to the test to validate that it is what you think it is. So it implies that the thing that is tested *meets* the specifications of the tests. Therefore, I prefer the translation: "verifying"—"verifying what is pleasing to the Lord."

Now apparently, I'm not the only one that has thought that way, because among other translations, one says: "and find out what pleases the Lord by putting it to the test"; or another one says: "learn in your own experience what is fully pleasing to the Lord"; or another says: "let your lives be living proofs of the things which belong to God." In other words: Live your life in such a way that your manner of life verifies, validates, illustrates what God says is the best thing to do.

This is kind of a subjective aspect of the assurance of your salvation. The fact that you are on the right course is verified by the peace that you have when you're walking in obedience with the Lord (cf. Prov. 2:8; Jas. 1:25)—by the *joy* that you have when you say "no" to the "flesh" and say "yes" to the "Spirit" (Gal. 5:16; cf. Rom. 8:6, 13). This is a ministry of the Holy Spirit to you.

This same word, that I don't like translated as "trying to learn," occurs over in Romans Chapter 12, Verse 2. You know that one; Verse 1 says: "Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice..." And in Verse 2, he says we are "transformed by the renewing of [our] mind, so that [we] may *prove*"—that's the same word as "trying to learn"—we "prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Or, like he says here (in Ephesians 5:9), it "consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth." We *illustrate* what light does when it comes upon the scene.

So, Don't Be Partakers in Darkness, But Walk as Children of Light. Don't go along with those old pre-Christian ways of thinking and living that you were so good at (Rom. 6:13). That's Point Number 1.

Number 2—Don't Participate, But Expose. Verse 11—"And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them" (NASB-1977). Now, I disagree with the New American Standard Bible-1995 Update translation leaving out the word "and"; I think it's important, because there really is a connection here.

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"Do not *partake*" in those things, but even more importantly, "Do not *participate*" in them. The word "participate" here in Verse 11 is a *stronger* word than the word "partaker" that we saw in Verse 7. This word [participate] is literally the prefix that means "with" and the verb that means "to have fellowship" or "to be a partner"; it means "partnering together in something." It can even be translated "communion" or "fellowship." That's where we symbolize and live out in practice that we are "one body" together (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12-13, 20; Eph. 4:4), we are "members of one another" (Eph. 4:25), we belong together, we need each other, we each have gifts that need to be exercised for the Body to grow and to mature (1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10).

So, "Do not become a participating fellow with"—if you want to say it that way—"the unfruitful deeds of darkness." "Unfruitful deeds of darkness"—those are things that are not spiritually productive; it doesn't bring glory to God, it isn't a good testimony, it doesn't bring that sense of satisfaction and joy and peace that obeying the Lord does. You know, a tree can be very pretty, but completely unfruitful. That's what he's saying here; and in the context, he's talking about anything that is void of "goodness and righteousness and truth"—Don't *be* a partner with that!

Now, when you see something like that—and we just saw it—don't take it too far. Now, I don't mean, don't *obey* it; but, keep it in perspective. This *does not mean* that, in order to be mature in Christ, you should totally withdraw from the world, have no contact. That idea of monasticism is one hundred percent, *totally anti-Biblical!* That's not how you get more *spiritual*, that's how you *hide!* (cf. Prov. 18:1)

We are to come to the fortress—to the supply depot—in order to be trained and equipped and dispatched and sent out to take the Good News that you can be delivered "from the domain of darkness and transferred...to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13) by the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

Or, to use the analogy that has been beaten to death a lot of times: Having a boat in the water—well, that's a good idea! But, having water in your boat—that's a problem! That's why we need, not a one-way valve that lets the water *into* the boat; we need to pump the water *out*, and we need to know how to drive that boat to where the message needs to be taken! Living in the world is good and necessary (cf. Jn. 20:21). Letting the attitudes of the world control your life, or filter into your church—*that's a bad thing* (cf. Jas. 1:27b).

We can take the words of the Apostle Paul in First Corinthians Chapter 5. He wrote a letter to the church in Corinth before the one that is preserved in the Bible as "First Corinthians," and he says this: First Corinthians 5:9-10—"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."

In other words: We live *in* the world; we go about and have our existence in a world that is still darkness, it's still depraved, it's still fallen. It is not going to be changed until Jesus comes again (2 Tim. 3:13).

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The society that is deteriorating and crumbling around us is just taking down its own façade and becoming what it really is at its core! That's all that we're seeing there. We *have* to live and interact with unbelievers, with people who have no interest in God, with people who maybe even *despise* the things of Christ (cf. Matt. 10:16).

Don't get *crazy* about how far you take this idea of having nothing to do with the things of the world. You know, I don't want you to stop at the convenience store and fill your car with gas and decide to buy a bottle of water, and walk up to the cashier and say, "Now, before I give you any of my money, do you call Jesus Christ your Lord?"

It doesn't mean you have no fellowship and no contact whatsoever. He's talking about *in the church*, you don't have fellowship with those who *profess* Christ and are still in darkness, who are bringing the pollution *into* the church. And if you aren't sure that he says that, keep reading the next three verses: First Corinthians 5:11-13—"But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any *so-called brother* if he is 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." Now, that *doesn't mean* that if Uncle George is unsaved, you can't eat in the same room with him at your Thanksgiving Dinner. He's talking about the "love feast" (Jude 12); he's talking about welcoming that person to the Lord's Table and to the communal meal of the church, acting as if that person is one of us when, in fact, he or she might not be (cf. Titus 1:16). So, "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves."

Don't let the wickedness flow into the church; keep it out. Keep the church *pure*—but take the message *out from* the gathering into the world, where it needs to go.

So, here comes the other side of the coin. Keep that in balance; we're not to be fellow participators, we don't just go along with the ways of the world. We need to "expose" those things. Look now at Ephesians 5, Verse 11—"And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them."

The word "expose" has a couple of aspects to its meaning. It means "to expose as guilty"—to prove that something is wrong; or, "to awaken someone to the consciousness of guilt." You would get an idea of the meaning of this word if you were to chase that Greek word through the New Testament. Sometimes it's translated "tell him his fault," "reprove," "expose," "convince," "convict," "rebuke," "confute," "punish." So the idea is that we should live in such a way that it is more and more clear what is right and what is wrong, what is "darkness" and what is "Light."

We are not called to go into the world and be morally neutral on things! If something is *wrong*, we need to expose it as wrong (Prov. 24:25)—and *certainly* not "participate" in it! It means we don't go out and *compromise* to "get along"! We speak truth, always—"in love" (Eph. 4:15). When we see the habits of the "old man" bubbling up in us, we ought to strip that away like we would strip off a filthy, stinky garment; renew our mind, and "put on the new man."

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Listen to the comments of one of my favorite Bible commentators, William Hendriksen. He's with the Lord now. He came out of the Dutch Reformed tradition, and I don't even think English was his first language—but oh, man, could he write! He says it this way: "For example, when God says, 'Worship Me alone,' and another says, 'Worship idols,' it will not do to try to worship Jehovah under the symbolism of images which are on the way to becoming idols...Sin must be exposed. One is not being 'nice' to a wicked man by endeavoring to make him feel what a fine fellow he is. The cancerous tumor must be removed, not humored. It is not really an act of love to smooth things over as if the terrible evil committed by those still living in the realm of darkness is not so bad after all."

Look, all the time we get people wanting to find the "common ground" between what we believe and other things (cf. Deut. 12:1-4; 2 Kings 17:33; Zeph. 1:5; Acts 7:42-43). "Well, you Christians—well, Mormons worship the same God! They have His name out on the side of their building—the Church of *Jesus Christ* of Latter-day Saints!" But they *define* "Jesus Christ" differently! They define "God" differently! They define "salvation" differently! They define "righteousness" differently! We don't have common ground! (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-15)

"Well, you Christians and Muslims and Jews—you are the three religious that are monotheistic. You share in common the God of Abraham!" No, we don't (Jn. 8:39-44). How much common ground do we have? Well, there are a lot of things we have in common. If you have a Muslim neighbor, he probably has a mortgage, just like you do. He has to mow his yard, just like you do. He has to work at his job to take care of his family, just like you do. He loves his kids, just like you do. And theologically, you have *zero* in common—absolutely nothing! And not only nothing in common; what you believe is *mutually exclusive* and *contradictory*, and the result of what you believe is the difference between *Heaven and Hell!* (cf. Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5) It's *that big!* It's *that big* of a deal.

And we need to "expose" the difference—in a loving manner (2 Tim. 2:24-26). We don't have to go out and beat people up. Christians are *not* the ones who go out and execute people who disagree with them. We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, by the Word of God, to change hearts (Ezek. 36:27; Jn. 3:3, 5; Titus 3:5), to draw people to the Savior (Acts 16:14; 1 Cor. 12:3b), to save people from the effects and the penalty of their sins (Rom. 8:1-2). But we need to be the ones who "expose" the truth. Do you want a *radical* example? Remember John the Baptist? He kept exposing Herod's incest. He was finally imprisoned; he eventually lost his head because of the hatred that the darkness had for the light that he shined in the darkness. Read all about it in Matthew Chapter 14.

Now, I'm not going to promise you that you're going to be martyred if you are walking in the light (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12), and you are exposing the fact that, no, our message is *not* in common with other religions; it's different. Every other religion says, "Here's what you must do in order to gain a relationship with God." Christianity says: "You're alienated from God, *and you can't do anything about it*—but God did; He sent His Son to bear the penalty for your sin so that you can be forgiven and reconciled to Him." We need to "expose" the distinctions and the differences (e.g., Jn. 13:8; cf. Prov. 14:12; 30:12).

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Ephesians Chapter 5, Verse 12—"...for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret." We don't try to find common ground; we try to lovingly shine light in the dark corners.

Now, you might think that there's sort of a contradiction here. How can you "expose" something without "speaking" about it? So you're not even supposed to "speak" about it, but you're supposed to "expose" it—how do you do that? Well, you don't *just* "speak" about it. Instead of idly talking about it, dabbling in it, having fellowship in *doing* those things with people that are the things of the flesh, the things of darkness; you don't gossip about the evil; you *speak up* about what is wrong. You live your life in such a way that there is a contrast between light and darkness. You don't join in with speaking crudely, or making light of sinful things (Prov. 14:9; cf. Ps. 36:1-2).

Ephesians 5:13—"But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light." When you live your life, walking as a "child of Light"; when you live your life, "letting your light shine before men"; there's a contrast between your lifestyle and the people around you in the world (Prov. 28:4). And you will become, evermore, a living rebuke to "the unfruitful deeds of darkness" around you.

Now, that doesn't mean go out and *berate* your neighbors for their darkness. It means *love* them; love them as *you* would want to be loved; "treat" them as "*you*" would want to be treated (Matt. 7:12)—but "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15; cf. Prov. 3:3).

Just as physical "light" causes everything that it strikes to "become visible," *you* should be the life of a "new man" in Christ that makes other people wonder, "What do you have that I don't? How is it that you can have joy in the midst of all of this stuff that's going on, that's so very, very sad?" Well, don't "participate" in what they're doing; stand to the side, love them, speak truth in love, preach the Gospel every opportunity that you have, but let your "light" be having the effect it is meant to have.

Have you ever had the experience of being with a group of people—maybe it's on your job, your neighborhood, it could be your own family—but people get to know that you are a Christian; and then they decide to say something terribly inappropriate, or use a bunch of foul language; have you ever had somebody do that, and then turn to *you* to apologize? Preachers get that all the time; like, you know, they'll say, "Pardon what I'm about to say." I want to say, "Wait a minute! *Just don't say it!*" But, as soon as they say, "Pardon me for it," they are *going to* say it. Or they say it, and then they apologize to *you* for what they said. What do you do in that case? Well, here's one good thing: It means they are recognizing that you are "Light in the Lord"! So, praise God that they've seen some "light"! Take that as a compliment, and ask the Lord for wisdom to turn moments like that into opportunities to point the attention toward Him (Col. 4:6).

Sometimes I say to a person, "You don't need to apologize to *me* for saying that." And sometimes I'll say, "I'm a golfer; I've heard them all before. If I hear a new one, I'll jot it down. You don't have to apologize to *me* for saying that, but there *is* somebody far more important, to whom we will *all* answer for our words and our thoughts and our actions."

Sermon Title: Walk As Children Of Light
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:7-14 (Ephesians #34)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 4-24-22

See where that takes the conversation. If they say, "What do you mean?" "Hey—how long do you have? May I share with you what is *the most important thing* about life? May I share with you why I try to live the way I try to live? It's because I belong to Jesus Christ; and could I tell you about Him?" Let that be your light "exposing" the deeds of darkness.

Now, there's one more verse here; and I'll admit: first glance, it's a little bit enigmatic. Verse 14—"For this reason it says, 'Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' "

Well, first of all, there's that word "it"; it's ambiguous. Grammatically, it could be "He," or it could be "it." If it's "He," then it's a reference to a person, and it's God. If it refers to an "it," it's probably referring to the written Word of God. "For this reason, *it* says..." Well, "it" what? It might be a reference to Isaiah Chapter 60, Verse 1; there is some very similar terminology there, and it could be that Paul is using that verse and making an inspired application from it. That is possible.

There's another suggestion that is probably more popular among commentators; it's that "it" is referring to a quotation from an early Christian hymn; and that hymn, in turn, might have been based on Isaiah 60, or something else, even, from the Old Testament.

But whatever it was, it's something that was familiar enough to the Christians in First-Century Ephesus that Paul could say "it" says this, and they knew what he was talking about. Very soon, we are going to get to the place where he's going to talk about how we should be "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (vs. 19), so maybe he just did that; maybe he quoted from a hymn.

It doesn't matter where it comes from, but it's a call to "wake up"—wake up out of the doldrums of being *comfortable* with the darkness that is in the world (cf. Rom. 13:11-12; 1 Pet. 1:13). To a Christian, this is a call to "walk in Light" as opposed to the spiritual sleepiness or apathy that you've fallen into. If you're going to apply it to those who are not yet saved—they're just professing salvation—then this is a call to wake up, come to life! You *are* "dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1)—*Wake up!* Let the risen Lord raise you! (cf. Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 18:31)

There are untold thousands of people like that, who would say, "I'm a Christian" (cf. Matt. 7:22-23). I grew up that way. I lived in that comfortable, suburban, post-World-War-2 lifestyle: it was kind of like, "*Everybody* is a Christian"—*a few* that aren't. I knew I wasn't Jewish; I had some Jewish friends in my classes, and they always got two extra holidays in the fall, and I didn't get them, so I knew I wasn't Jewish. I knew I wasn't Hindu or Mormon or Buddhist, or something—*so I must be a Christian!* Then I heard the Gospel, and do you know what? God raised me from the dead! He *brought me to life* in Christ!

If you're here today, and you've been comfortable with saying, "I'm a Christian," but it isn't your *Number One priority in life* to be "light" in the "darkness" around you, may I suggest: "Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ *will* shine on you."

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Jesus Himself had some strong words for people like that. He dictated them to the Apostle John about 25 or 30 years after Paul wrote Ephesians; and He told John: "Send this to the Christians around that area. Start with Ephesus; and then Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea"—to those "seven churches" (Rev. 1:11). The *very same church* in the *very same place* in Ephesus, and all those other places; but He had a special message for each one.

Here's the one that He wrote to the church in Sardis; He says, in Revelation 3:1-3—"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this"—go back to Chapter 1; that's Jesus saying, "I'm saying this." He says: "I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead." *Ouch!* When the Lord says, "You claim to be alive, but you're dead," that's not a good spiritual situation to be in (1 Tim. 5:6; cf. Titus 1:16). He says, "Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you."

It's this simple: Are you "participating," "partaking" of "the darkness," or are you "walking as a child of Light"? Are you "partaking of the unfruitful deeds of darkness," or are you "exposing them" by how you live? Do your friends and neighbors and relatives and people around you *know* what you stand for? Does your life, by contrast, show a rebuke—a loving rebuke—to sinners, that enables you to preach the Gospel? That's all that He means by "walk as children of Light."

And let's pray:

Our Father, as we prepare to have a meal together, but then to go into the world, we pray that You will give us the desire to make sure that we make the most of all of our times together; that we teach each other, encourage each other, reinforce each other, bear one another's burdens; that we prepare to "walk as Light" and to "expose" the "deeds of darkness." Father, we know that every one of us, no matter how long we have walked with the Savior, we remember all too well those old ways; keep us from them, we pray. And please, as our light shines through the way that we live, turn every encounter into an opportunity for the Gospel, that we might "speak the truth in love" that "Christ" indeed "died for our sins, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day," just "according to the Scriptures," and that there is new life in Him. Help us to be the ambassadors for Your kingdom, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.