

Walk in the Light
Ephesians 5:8-14

John 15:1-13

John 15:14-27

Responsive Psalm 135:1-7

Today we are going to pick back up in chapter 5, specifically verses 8-14 where Paul continues his exhortation to the believers in Ephesus to walk, to strive, to work out their faith in a matter that is worthy of their calling. As we spoke last week, there are many temptations in this world that would seek to draw us back into our old ways, even sometimes our friends or family members can be instruments of that temptation. One of Satan's ploys, is questioning and sowing seeds of doubt, "did God really say?" "Surely its not that big of a deal." "whats the harm, its not like its hurting anyone." Are all words with a mocking tone to entice and push a believer into something he or she knows all to well they should be avoiding, something we have all probably heard or dealt with at one time or another in our own lives.

But as Paul said in verse 6, "Let no one deceive you with empty words." Do not fall prey to these temptations, do not fall prey to the peer pressure, therefore Paul says, "do not be partakers with them." Paul would not include this instruction if the threat, and temptations were not of danger. Now what he is not saying here, is to cut ourselves off entirely from the people of the world as some would interpret and understand a verse like this. Some, acting as modern day Judiasers take pride in their separation, believing themselves something special over others, forgetting that they themselves were once just as the others, this sort of mentality and separation does nothing but drive a wedge in all relationships and is counter intuitive to the ministry that we are supposed to reflect. We have not been saved from our sinful ways to trade them for the sins of pride and arrogance, but instead we are to reflect the person and nature of Christ to all those around us, the savior who had compassion upon the lost, the savior who pursued you when you as his own when you were against him.

So this is not a call to separate ourselves outside of the world, to live in little communes, because as we all know, isolation and separation does not keep us from sin, for our sinful desires well up from inside of us. We are to be in the world, but not of it as we see Jesus' prayer recorded by John in chapter 17:14 "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one. The y are not of the world just as I am not of the world." We are not to separate ourselves out of the world, for the world is our mission, the lives of the people that God puts before us is the ground where we spread the seed of the gospel, and God has prepared the grounds in which those seeds are to grow. This can not happen if we were to separate ourselves from the world, instead what Paul is instructing here, is do not join them in their folly, do not be partakers with them in their sinful behaviors.

Our lives are to be ones that bring glory and honor to God, a life that is God centered, sacrificial, just, and righteous and this is a stark difference then a life outside of Christ. And there is a reality check built into this, that is, if your life isn't different from the worlds, then you may need to take a good long look at your own claim of faith. For this is not something that is optional for the believer, this is a built in intrinsic trait for we take after our father, and our father is either the father of heaven or the father of hell. That is why earlier in the chapter, as we talked about last week, is the exhortation to avoid even the appearance of evil. Let no one doubt, or even think that you are involved in such things for it can, and will effect the gospel ministry in which we are called.

So again, we see this exhortation from Paul, starting in verse 8. So let us go ahead and read our passage this morning, but let's go ahead and just start from verse 1 and read to verse 14. So again this text does not exist in a vacuum, this isn't a new thought, or subject but a continuation. Since all of these things are true, that you are united together in Christ, that you are to put away the shameful things of the sinful past, and live as those who are to walk worthy of the calling of which we have been called, because you are not longer what you once were. This "For" which Paul begins this sentence with is the reason why we as believers should not partner, nor be partakers with the ungodly because we are no longer full of darkness as we once were, but we are now children of light. The past of each and every one of us who believe was a life of spiritual darkness, it was a life without Christ, a life without God, and a life without hope. Before Christ's intervention into our lives, we were children of Satan, lost in our darkness, and in fact, we reveled in it because we were none the wiser.

As Jesus said, "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (John 3:19-21) Paul contrast here, what we were, and now what we are. We were darkness, but now we are light in the Lord. For the believer this is the new spiritual state, no longer blind and hopelessly lost in darkness and sin, but now we have the light of Christ shining in us, which exposes and roots out the dark recesses of our hearts and minds so that we repent, and put them away. It is God who has delivered us into this spiritual light, and it is he himself who is this light...again we are one in him, partakers of his glorious gift of faith, and righteousness, having his righteousness imputed to our accounts so that we maybe found just and holy and without blemish just as he is, not because we are..but because he is and he has covered our blemish with his blood, banishing the spiritual darkness from within our souls and now dwells with us, the shining light renewing and refreshing us daily.

Therefore again...our walk, is a walk that reflects this reality. Our actions, our life, our speech, our conduct, our fellowship, our worship, our praise...all of it, reflects this reality of the spiritual light of God shining in us. It is our new nature that we have in Christ which compels us in this walk, and it is only by his power, by his strength that we can accomplish it, for in our natural state of darkness we are incapable, indeed we don't even want to have anything to do with it, to the blind, the light is but a myth, to the lost, the destination is unknown, and the deaf are unable to hear instruction, which was all of us until by God's sovereign power, by this grace, he healed our blindness so that we may see the light, he found us as we wandered aimlessly through life, and he has given us the ability to hear his word so that we may know him, so that we may grow in our fellowship with him, and so that we can see and hear his guidance as we now walk in this newness of life.

This Christian conversion, this new birth is a stark 180 degree shift from what we once were, its a new whole new world, that we are living for, while we are yet existing in this one. And notice here, Paul isn't just saying that we are to walk in the light, but he says that we are light, we once were darkness but now we are light in the Lord. This has to do with our lifestyle, with our ministry, and again how our life reflects our beliefs and the call that we are to be a light to the world shining through the darkness so that others whom God has quickened, may see, hear, and know him and no longer be lost wandering aimlessly in the darkness of this world. This goes back again to what Paul was saying.. not only are we not to be partakers, or join ourselves to unbelievers and sinful ways, indeed we can't be for such things is darkness and we are children of light.

So the challenge comes again, does your life reflect the light of Christ, or is it more akin to darkness? Many Christians struggle with assurance of faith, how can they know that they truly are saved. The simplest answer to this, is you can't...you can only trust God, but he has also given some tests and this is one of them, the reflection of our lives, we live for what we love, if we love money, it will consume us and we will live for it, if we love things, it will consume us and we will live for it, if we love God, it will consume us and we will live for it. Our life is the test, and as Paul had said, run the race as one who is running to win the prize. This life is full of trials, temptations, pitfalls, worries, and strife, but Jesus said, he who endures to the end will be saved. There is so much in this life that seeks to rob us of our faith, working to make us doubt God...but his children will never doubt, and they will never turn their back on him for they have been given the spirit in the new birth which testifies of him. God's children, know they are God's children because of the holy spirit's work within their lives.

God's children no longer worry if they are worthy, or good enough, because they know and understand they are not, and it is only by the grace and mercy of God that we are found righteous before him. The spirit testifies within us, that we are God's, and the fruit of the spirit is the goodness of God working through us to will and to do that which is pleasing to him. Look at verse 9, of chapter 5 here. "For the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth." As Jesus said, you will be known by your fruits, by your actions, by your conduct, seeking after God and that which is pleasing to him leads to all goodness, righteousness, and truth.

This is why our conduct, and the avoidance of even the appearance of evil is so important for the believer, it is our testimony of faith, it is the proofs of the spirit working in the lives of God's children. This goodness, which is born from the spirit is a goodness in nature and in effectiveness, that is, it is a goodness that effects others, it is an outward facing action, and demeanor toward this outside of ourselves. It is a striving for moral excellence, an active seeking to be workers of God's goodness and mercy toward one another. It is a goodness born out of the light of which we have been given, a goodness that shines through the darkness, that stands in a stark difference in a world that is self centered and self pleasing, and self worshiping. As our society seems to ever fall further and further from God, the concern and interest for another, for a person outside of oneself because less and less of a reality. But the good news of that seemingly bad news, is that the light of God shines brightest when in the darkest of climates.

The word of God stands as a beacon of hope in a lost and dark world, and we are those lighthouses, made to reflect and shine God's glory, both as a call to repentance and as a catalyst of exposure as Paul says here in verse 13. "But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light." There is an element of simply living the life of a Christian naturally stands in opposition of the world around us. Therefore we are hated and despised by the world, the creatures of darkness do not like the light, and do not like their darkness exposed. As we read this morning, the teachings of Jesus in the book of John, "If you were of the world the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of this world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." We should never be surprised when we are met with opposition for simply living our lives and standing upon our beliefs. We should not be surprised when the world seeks every opportunity to slander and belittle us. For it is the darkness fighting against the light, trying to snuff it out so their evil may not be exposed.

But we also don't need to fear this darkness, nor their persecution because no matter the physical outcome nothing can separate us from the spiritual reality of our life sealed in the blood of Christ. Our hope is in the next life, our hope is in that day when we will be in the very presence of our Lord and Savior, where there is no more tears, no more pain, no more suffering, therefore we can endure what this life brings for our hope is not in this world, but in Christ, who has conquered death, and has called us to a higher calling beyond this life, to an eternal life in glory seated at the throne of the mighty creator, the God of the universe, our loving father.

A Christian can not be neutral about the dark, it is our calling to be light to the world, and to expose the darkness of sin for what it is, a rebellion against God. By walking in the light, by living by the word of God, seeking those things which are pleasing to him, beneficial to one another, and honorable and righteous before God, our lives, our conduct, our words shine into the darkness of the world and carry with it the word of God. Those who love God, love the truth of his word, and seek out the his light, and his holiness. But those who love darkness, avoid the light of God, fear the truth, and seek to hide from it. In this ministry we don't need to necessarily go on the offensive all the time pointing out sins and failures, for we each have those ourselves do we not? We must simply share the gospel message through our words, and our deeds, and God will use it to disperse the darkness in the hearts and minds of his children.

“There for he says, Awake you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” The call to life in Christ goes out, the message of the gospel is made manifest through us shining into the darkness of this world awakening, and raising from the dead all those to whom Christ gives understanding, to all those whom Christ causes to likewise be a light into this darkness. Therefore as Paul said in verse 1, we are to be imitators of God, walk in love as Christ has also loved, so that we may be a reflection, and a carrier of this gospel message of hope. This is who we are as believers, this is our nature, and God is our hope, ever resting in him, ever walking in the light of his word, ever praising his grace and mercy shown to us by his death so we may live. May God use us as his messengers of light, may we live to this holy standard and have our lives be a reflection of what God has done, so others may see, so that others may know, and that others may come to believe as well.