

August 16, 2015

*Ephesians 5:6-21: **“Walk As Children of Light”***

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Most of our epistle lesson for this morning is an exhortation for us to be good Christians. Paul begins this section by saying: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Eph. 5:1-2)." This is a very important place to start. Being a good Christian or walking in love is not for the purpose of getting God to love us or earning our way to heaven. Rather, we walk in love because Christ has loved us. In other words, we see him dying on the cross to pay for our sins and we desire to be sinless and strive to do what is right. We do not believe that Christ died for our sins in order that we may boldly sin all the more.

In Romans Paul writes: "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1-2)." Peter also says the same thing in his first epistle. We offer spiritual sacrifices. That means that we offer ourselves. We deny ourselves. We sacrifice ourselves because Christ suffered for us. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds we have been healed. Consequently, we abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against our souls. This is no easy thing to strive for because sin would have ever have dominion over us.

Paul says in verse 8 of our epistle lesson: "At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. **Walk as Children of Light.**" The contrast between darkness and light is familiar imagery in many places throughout the Bible. We find it from Genesis to Revelation. With the fall into sin, darkness has become associated with the state of this unbelieving world. Disconnected from God there is nothing but the darkness of ignorance and unbelief. Light is the language of knowledge and faith. Darkness is to be apart from God. Light is to be connected to him. Darkness is a movement to death, while light is life and forever living.

Like the rest of this fallen, unbelieving world, we were once darkness. Paul writes in very strong language in verse eight of our lesson. It was not just that we were *in the darkness*, as if it were something on the outside of us. Rather, we *were* darkness. That means that we were at one time opposed to God, opposed to real love, opposed to what is really good because we were consumed with ourselves. We can use three words to describe it: disobedient, deceptive, and deadly. All three words are really captured in verse six: "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." You cannot walk away from such language and conclude that sin is no big deal. It is a very big deal.

For Christians, the temptation is always to revert back to darkness. We live in the midst of those who cut themselves off from the light, who continually live in darkness and pursue selfishness. Darkness cannot produce real and lasting fruit. At best it produces wax fruit. It only looks good on the outside. What God demands is a goodness that is all together perfect and from a perfect heart. When a person is without faith in the perfection of Jesus, what appears to be good works are not good before God because they are full of selfishness and far away from the sacrifice of his one and only Son. The best works of the

unbeliever are always sin. As Paul writes in Romans 14:23, "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." That really puts it into perspective. They are hard words for the unbeliever to hear.

Paul warns Christians: "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them." It doesn't take a genius to understand that the pursuit of sin is devastating to the Christian life. The idea that it's okay to pursue deeds of darkness and embrace the light at the same time just doesn't make sense if one really considers what Paul is saying. In his first epistle, the apostle John writes:

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

I don't know how anyone can walk away from the Bible and think that sin is okay when you have Jesus Christ. Sin is forgiven when you have Jesus Christ, but it is never okay. Sin is always opposed to who he is and what he has done for us on the cross. Those who believe in him strive to **Walk As Children of Light**. And when we fail to strive after the light, there is only repentance and a resuming of the striving. It doesn't make sense that we would believe in him and actively pursue darkness. Instead, everything points to the Christian struggling with darkness and overcoming by the one who overcame all darkness on the cross.

Let no one deceive you with empty words. Because of sin the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Paul writes:

Therefore do not become partners with them . . . try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them . . . Awake, O Sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you . . . Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

The words really stand on their own don't you think? Walking as children of light does not mean that we actively pursue the deeds of darkness. Rather, we expose them for what they are. The deeds of darkness are death. Are we awake? Haven't we risen from the dead? Doesn't Christ shine on us?

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never, and will never, overcome it. The light of Christ shone in the darkness on that dark Good Friday, when darkness covered the land, during those hours when Christ was hanging on the cross. It was in that darkness that God's own Son was taking the judgment and the wrath that we deserved, suffering hell in our place. The Savior of mankind, Jesus Christ, took all your sins, all of your death, all of your darkness so that you might have forgiveness and life. And when Christ arose on Easter morning, a new day dawned for all who trust in him. His light of life disperses our darkness. As it says in 2 Corinthians 4:5, "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as

Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of the darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

And now we start walking. Again our theme: **Walk As Children of Light**. "Walking" is the Bible's way of saying how you live, how you conduct your life in a consistent manner. You have the light within you. You are light now, in connection with the Lord. So walk in the light. Conduct your life now in a manner fitting for children of light.

The darkness is disobedient, deceptive, and deadly. Don't go there. And if you find you do, repent and get back to walking! The light is who you are: wakened from the dead, walking in the way of righteousness, wise in discerning the will of the Lord. And one more thing about the light. It is joyful! Paul closes this section with these words: "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ."

Amen.

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