

**Children of Light – Ephesians 5:7-14**  
Sermon by Associate Pastor Joe Davis  
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I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

As we begin today, I want to ask you a question for deep thought. How important is light to our survival and daily existence? We know, of course, that we need light to be able to see and move around safely and effectively, but what are some other essential things light, and in particular the sun, do for us and our planet?

Clearly the sun and its light are crucial to many things on earth. Knowing this, scientists have asked the question: What would happen if the sun disappeared? Well, the consequences of the sun disappearing are beyond what we've even touched on in our discussion so far. I'd like to share with you some thoughts on the theoretical disappearance of the sun that I found on the website, *spaceanswers.com*:

This question [what would happen if the sun disappeared?] carries with it immense complications owing to the Sun's influence on the Solar System, so we'll take a hypothetical look at it first from the perspective of the motion of bodies in the Solar System. Anything in orbit around the Sun is basically moving fast enough to be in a constant state of freefall towards it. If the planets, for example, suddenly stopped moving they would immediately be pulled towards the Sun and fall into it.

So, let's imagine that, due to some unknown reason, our Sun suddenly vanished. In this instance all the planets, asteroids, comets and whatever else would retain their forward motion. Therefore, rather than fall towards the now nonexistent Sun, they would fly off in a straight line into space.

What happens next is anyone's guess. Some of the planets might gravitationally interact with one another, especially as the inner planets are moving faster than the outer planets and would potentially 'catch up' to them. Otherwise, the likelihood is all the objects would continue to move in a straight line through space out of the Solar System, and it would be many

thousands of years before they came into the vicinity of another system or object.

Of course, for us on Earth, the consequences would be pretty dire. On the plus side, our planet retains heat rather well, so we wouldn't freeze to death instantly. Also, as light from the Sun takes eight and a half minutes to reach us, we'd have a final few moments of glorious sunshine before our planet was bathed in darkness.

Those on the night side wouldn't notice much difference until, a few seconds after day-dwellers were thrust into darkness, the Moon suddenly disappeared as it no longer had the Sun's light to reflect. The planets in the sky would follow suit, disappearing one by one as the wave of darkness reached them.

Eventually, though, the lack of the Sun's radiation would leave us pretty chilly. Just think about how much colder it is at night time rather than the day, but imagine that same temperature drop constantly occurring. Within days the world would be a hundred or so degrees below freezing, and within weeks it'd be just 50 or so degrees above absolute zero. The atmosphere itself would also freeze and fall to Earth, leaving us exposed to the harsh radiation travelling through space.

Life as we know it would have to adapt to survive to our new frozen Earth, and it's likely only microorganisms beneath the surface could survive thanks to heat from the core. For humans, we'd probably have to pool together and build a few nuclear fusion reactors in order to last a while. All in all, it probably wouldn't be that preferable for the Sun to disappear but, if it did, at least our days wouldn't be numbered immediately. Just, you know, a little beyond immediately.

Clearly, we would be toast (or maybe more of an ice cube) if the sun suddenly disappeared. We need the sun and its light in order to survive and function here on earth.

Well today in Ephesians chapter 5 we're going to look at the significance of light in our spiritual lives and as we learn to be imitators of God and walk in love. And

what we'll find out is that light is just as essential for us in our walk with God as it is to the human body and all life as we know it on this planet.

If you'll remember from last week, Paul called us in Ephesians chapter 5, verses 1 through 6, to imitate God and walk in love, giving ourselves up for God and others. Just as children imitate their parents, we are called to imitate God. And Paul reminded us that we can't imitate him and walk in love as long as immorality, impurity or greed have any place in our lives. These 3 sinful behaviors grow out of idolatry, worshipping anything other than God, and are the reason for God's wrath and Jesus Christ having to go to the cross. As such, we should have absolutely nothing to do with them in either our words or our actions or even what we find our humor in.

This week we'll pick up in verse 7 of Ephesians chapter 5 and continue on to verse 14. Today's message is called: *Children of Light*. Let's read verses 7 through 14 of Ephesians chapter 5:

***7 Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light 9 (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. 14 For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."***

## II. OUR OLD IDENTITY: DARKNESS (CHILDREN OF WRATH)

So Paul's first statement in verse seven is a command. Having just shown us why we should have nothing to do with immorality, impurity or greed, he says, ***"Therefore do not be partakers with them..."*** Do not participate in even minor ways in the things that bring about the wrath of God and the things that arise out of worshipping other gods. Don't just continue to be like the world, chasing after empty and dead things that have no capacity for fulfilling our deepest needs and providing us with light and life. Don't continue walking around in darkness.

And why does Paul say we shouldn't be partakers with them? He gives us two reasons in verse 8. The first reason has to do with our old identity and who we used to be before coming to faith and new life in Jesus Christ. Paul says that formerly we were darkness. Notice that he doesn't say we were just walking around in darkness, though that is true. But here he says that darkness was actually our identity. More than just being controlled by darkness, we actually were darkness within ourselves. More than just being a victim of darkness, we were an active player in bringing darkness to ourselves and others.

Growing up in Alaska I've experienced quite a bit of darkness. Now I lived in the south-central part of Alaska and never experienced a darkness like they experience up on the North Slope in the dead of winter. Up there they experience times when the sun never comes up at all. For me the worst it got was a sunrise at about 10 AM and sunset at about 4 PM. But when the sun came up in the dead of winter it would only rise slightly above the mountains and never go any higher in the sky. Then after a few hours it would fall beneath the mountains again. And the winter light in Alaska is very pale and weak. On our winter trips to Alaska, Mindy has noticed that the sun always seems to be in your eyes when you're driving around, since it never gets very high in the sky.

But even though I never experienced the darkness as they do on the North Slope, I experienced enough to know that it's not pleasant or enjoyable to walk around in the darkness most of the time. I don't know anyone who would say they enjoy when things get really dark in Alaska. Some people can survive it better than others, but I don't know of any that would say they look forward to it and enjoy it. And when December 22 rolls around there are a lot of parties celebrating the shortest day of the year and the fact that from there on out it will start getting lighter each day.

Darkness is not a good place to be and yet that is where we were before we came to Christ and that is where the majority of the world spends their existence...muddling through life in darkness. This is the state each of us experienced and walked around in before we were rescued by our Savior. Paul describes this desperate state of existence, or really nonexistence, in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1 to 3, where he says:

***2 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.***

This is a picture of a life lived in complete darkness...a life without the sun, frozen and dead and out of control. And what Paul tells us here in Ephesians chapter 5, is that that is where we are no longer. Darkness is no longer who we are and as such we should have nothing to do with the ways of darkness. The beautiful truth for us is that God didn't leave us in darkness and under his wrath. Instead he stepped in and walked us into light and new life through faith in Christ. He caused the sun to rise on us, thawing us out, stabilizing our lives and enabling us to see the way clearly before us:

***But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.***

We have undergone a massive transformation from death to life and from darkness to light and are now the recipients for all eternity of the surpassing riches of God's grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

### III. OUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST: CHILDREN OF LIGHT

This brings us to the second reason Paul gives us for why we should not be partakers, along with the sons of disobedience, of things that bring about the wrath of God. And that reason is that we are now light in the Lord. More than just walking in the light, our identity is now light in the Lord. We are light because of the transformation God has brought about in each of us who have believed in Christ.

In its commentary on the Greek word translated, "light," Vines Expository Dictionary says this: "Primarily light is a luminous emanation, probably of force, from certain bodies, which enables the eye to discern form and color. Light requires an organ adapted for its reception...Where the eyes is absent, or where it has become impaired from any cause, light is useless. Man, naturally, is incapable of receiving spiritual light inasmuch as he lacks the capacity for spiritual things...Hence believers are called 'sons of light' ...not merely because they have received a revelation from God, but because in the New Birth they have received the spiritual capacity for it."

We've undergone a dramatic transformation in coming to new life in Christ. Previously spiritual light was useless to us and we walked around in spiritual darkness. But now, through faith in Christ, we've been given the capacity both to understand and to be the light. God has moved us from darkness to light. And if you think about light, what does it always do to the darkness? If light comes into a dark room what happens? The dark goes away doesn't it? Light and darkness don't mix...it's either one or the other.

Thinking back to my experience in Alaska, the season of light when the sun never completely goes down is universally enjoyed by people that live there. It brings extra energy, cheerfulness, and the ability to get lots of things done. It's not uncommon to suddenly realize it's 11:30 PM and you're still going strong. As we already discussed in our opening discussion, light is a powerful thing and has many positive effects on our daily existence. And light makes the darkness flee.

My friends, God wants each of you to know today that in him you are light...You are a child of light and in your life and in the lives of those people you touch, darkness should be on the run. Let's challenge ourselves to believe this life-changing truth today, because until we believe it we won't begin to walk in it. And as with all biblical truth, it is meant to not only be believed, but also to be walked and to impact every aspect of our daily existence.

#### IV. WALKING AS A CHILD OF LIGHT

Paul makes this clear for us in the last part of verse 8 where he calls us, in light of our new identity, to WALK as children of light. And the concept of walking, of course, speaks of action. Our new identity as children of light should affect our

daily choices and motivate us to action. When we truly believe this life transforming truth about being children of light, our walk and how we relate to God and other people are going to change in big ways. If we don't really believe it, we'll continue walking and participating in darkness.

Now in verses 9 and 10 Paul shares with us some key truths about walking as a child of light. In verse 9 he shows us what the fruit will be in our lives and in verse 10 he shares with us the life principle that will enable us to walk this way. Let's look first at the underlying life principle that needs to guide us as we learn to walk as children of light. Paul says, "***Walk as children of light...trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.***" If we are walking as children of light, we are focused on trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

One thing that's immediately clear is that it takes effort to learn how to be pleasing to the Lord. That phrase, "trying to learn," indicates that it doesn't just happen by osmosis. Those who are walking as children of light are seeking the Lord and trying to get to know him through the reading and study of his word, prayer, listening to biblical preaching and teaching, and anything else that will guide them further on in their relationship. How can we know how to walk as a child of light if we don't study and pray and use whatever tools God has given us to know him more? God has made us light in Christ, but learning how to walk that out comes through study and disciplined seeking of the Lord.

I once had a person tell me that I shouldn't read the Bible or go to church unless it was really my heart's desire and something I really longed to do. To do so would just be me trying to please God and do things in my own strength, rather than allowing God to create within me the hunger and desire to do these things. He believed that I needed to fully rely on God to motivate me to go to church and read the Bible rather than disciplining myself to do it on a regular basis. However, while I do 100% believe that we can only walk worthy by being in complete dependence on God and walking by the power of the Spirit, I do not accept the idea that there's no place for discipline in our spiritual walk.

If I were to follow the recommendation of this friend of mine, I would be operating my life by my feelings and it would be very likely that I would rarely attend church or read the Bible because there's so many other things I could spend my time on, and so many things that the world and Satan are constantly

throwing at me to eat up my time and keep me distracted from my pursuit of God.

God doesn't call us to live our lives by our feelings. Feelings are fickle and change more often than the weather in Eastern Oregon. God instead calls us to live by the power of the Spirit and to allow him to guide, direct and empower us to walk worthy. In this walk there are just some things that we know are necessary for our spiritual growth and that need to be a part of our daily lives whether we feel like it or not. Reading the Bible and fellowshiping with other believers are two of those things and are both key elements needed as we try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Disciplining ourselves in these areas by the power of the Holy Spirit is essential to walking as children of light.

So what picture does Scripture give us of what is pleasing to the Lord? Clearly that question can only be answered completely through diligent study of the whole counsel of God's Word. However there is a passage in Colossians that gives us a concise summary of a lifestyle that pleases the Lord. Turn with me if you would to Colossians chapter 1 verses 9 to 14. In this passage we get a snapshot of the lifestyle that pleases our Lord. Let's read verses 9 to 14:

***9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. 13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.***

Did you notice in verse 14 that reference again to us moving away from darkness and into the light: The Father...***has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son...***from dark to light. But I hope you also noticed the things that please the Lord in all respects.



Here is the picture we get of a lifestyle that pleases the Lord:

- 1) Being filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.
- 2) Bearing fruit in every good work.
- 3) Increasing in the knowledge of God.
- 4) Being strengthened with all power.
- 5) Giving thanks to the Father.

And notice it all starts and continues with prayer and dependence of God. Paul begins by praying that we would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. In the same way we will get nowhere unless we're in constant communication with God, seeking him, giving thanks to him, sharing our struggles and joys with him, and asking for his wisdom and strength in all things. That's the heart of what pleases God: a life lived in close relationship and fellowship and dependence on him. That's when we begin to bear fruit in good works and to grow in the knowledge of him through his word and to be strengthened with power to do things we could never do apart from him. If you want some guiding principles to put up on your wall as you try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord, here they are in Colossians.

And what does Paul tell us, in Ephesians chapter 5, is the fruit of walking as children of light? The fruit is found in verse 9:

***9 (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)..***

As we learn to walk in that moment by moment dependence on God, we will bear fruit and that fruit will be goodness, righteousness and truth. The goodness spoken of here refers to "kindly activities" on behalf of other people...doing things that are good and beneficial to other people. It also includes the idea of tough love... Being willing to do and say things that might not be pleasant, but that are in the best interests of other people and motivated out of a desire for good in their lives.

Righteousness here, according to the *Blue Letter Bible* speaks of "integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness and correctness of thinking, feeling and acting." We get a

picture of a life that is consistent with God's character and the teachings of His Word.

And finally, truth, which is self-explanatory. God calls us to honesty and speaking the truth in love in everything. As we walk as children of light our lives will be characterized by goodness, righteousness and truth.

## V. SHINING LIGHT INTO DARKNESS

So we've established that we are now light in the Lord and are called to walk as children of light. As we move on to verses 11 through 13 Paul introduces us to a new approach to dealing with darkness. Paul says in verses 11 through 13:

***11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.***

What we see Paul calling us to do in these verses is to go on the offensive. Not only are we not to participate in the deeds of darkness, which are by their very nature unfruitful and dead, but we are called to expose them to the light. The word, "expose," here is quite interesting because it really means to convict or refute or to find fault with and correct. The picture this word gives us is an aggressive attack on the unfruitful deeds of darkness, more than just staying away from them but actually going after them with the light to expose them and bring freedom to those who are under their spell. This applies to sin in our own lives and sin in the lives of others.

What Paul is calling us to here, is to allow our light to so shine that we are willing to confront head-on those dark things that are destroying the lives of people all around us...not to just passively sit by and watch people destroy themselves, but to love enough that we're willing to call them out of the darkness and shine God's light and truth into the darkest of addictions and immorality and even greed and selfishness.

Paul is calling us to light up the night like a bonfire... To take this little light of mine and start a roaring blaze to battle the darkness that is holding people hostage and keeping them from walking with or even knowing the true Light, our Savior Jesus Christ.

It's so easy for us to be passive and just stand by while people are walking around in darkness and chaining themselves up to addictions and sin that keep them from fellowship and new life with their Creator. It's hard to confront. Sometimes it's hard to believe that people can change and that there's hope in Christ in even the darkest and most hopeless of addictions and sin.

Please don't get me wrong here. I'm not telling us to start nit picking other people's lives, pointing out faults and unloading our opinions about grey areas in Scripture. I'm not promoting a legalistic mentality where we go around saying, "Don't do this, don't do that," while we ourselves overlook the log in our own eyes. But what I am saying is that when we see our brothers and sisters in Christ involving themselves in immorality, impurity, greed and other deeds of darkness, chaining themselves up to addictions and ways of living that are destroying their lives, hindering their witness and their growth in Christ, we need to be willing to speak the truth in love and shine the light he's given us into that darkness. We also need to shine that light into the lives of those who are without Christ and still in darkness, offering them the hope, new life and light only he can offer.

What Paul wants each of us to know today is that we truly are light in Christ and that light is meant to chase away the darkness and reach into the darkest parts of our lives and the darkest parts of the people whose lives God has allowed us to touch. We think we're so good at keeping secrets and hiding the dark parts of our lives from others. We even like to think we can hide them from God and keep them away from his penetrating light. Have you ever noticed how people living hopeless lives, enslaved to drug use or alcohol or immoral and abusive living, seem to keep their houses dark and dingy. You open the door and there's an air of darkness: all the shades are pulled, the house stinks and there's junk piled everywhere. Sin craves darkness and hates the light.

Jesus himself, in John chapter 3, verses 19 to 21 tells us this:

***19 "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. 20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."***

Well it's time my friends to let the light shine into the dark places...To believe that God can and will bring freedom and hope and light to people in darkness when we walk as children of light and go on the offensive with Christ's light shining.

## VI. LIGHT'S INVITATION

And as we close today, I want you to notice the invitation that light gives to all people in verse 14 of Ephesians 5:

***"Awake, sleeper,  
And arise from the dead,  
And Christ will shine on you."***

This is the hope we have to offer as we walk as children of light. We get to offer life from the dead and light instead of darkness. For even those in the most hopeless of circumstances and addictions, this offer stands: "Let Christ in and let his light shine and you will wake up to life like you've never known and freedom from all those old, dead ways of darkness. Let the light in and become light in Jesus Christ."

We just finished celebrating the birth of the one who called himself the Light of the World. Jesus Christ is the true light and the one who brings light to all things. Without Jesus and his light shining in our own lives, we would still be in darkness, frozen, dead and spinning out of control. We would have no hope of defeating the darkness in our own lives and in the lives of others. This task of carrying the light into the dark places is a daunting task. But remember this word from 2 Corinthians 4, verses 5 to 8:

***5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves...***

Let's seek the Lord and his wisdom and power, trying to learn what is pleasing in his sight...learning to walk by his power and bring fruit in our lives. As we do that, may God stir up in each of us a passion and a boldness and a battle mindset as we learn to truly walk as children of light and watch as Jesus brings life to the dead and light into the darkest of places! Let's remember Jesus' words in John chapter 8, verse 12: ***"I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life."***