

The Church, God's Plan for This Age: What It Means to Walk as Children of the Light

Ephesians 5:7-14

November 8, 2020

Today we'll learn what it means to walk as children of the light in the midst of a world that's permeated with darkness.

1. Don't participate in the sinful behavior of those who don't know God (7-8b).
  - a. Your former identity was depraved (7-8a)
    - i. Before you trusted Christ, you were "children of disobedience" (6-7).
      1. You were by nature a law-breaker.
      2. You were bound by your lusts – "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44).
    - ii. Before you trusted Christ, you were "darkness" (8a).
      1. You not only walked in darkness, you were darkness, "dead in trespasses and sins" (2:1).
      2. Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."
  - b. Your new identity is in Christ (8b)
    - i. When you trusted Christ, He brought you out of darkness into light.
      1. Colossians 1:13 "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son:"
      2. 2 Corinthians 4:6 "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."
      3. 1 Thessalonians 5:5 "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."
    - ii. Because of your redemption, you are "light in the Lord."
      1. It is only because of your union with Christ that this transformation has occurred.
      2. John 8:12 "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."
2. Walk as children of the light (8c-10).
  - a. Walk in the light of your new identity – "walk as children of the light" (8c).
    - i. Believers are to reflect their new nature in their daily lives.
    - ii. Believers who were once "children of disobedience" are now "children of light."
    - iii. Believers are to walk in a way that is consistent with who they are in Christ (4:1, 17; 5:2, 15).
      1. Although our identity has changed, there has not yet been a complete change in conduct.
      2. This walk is a process of growth to maturity in Christ that we are to engage in.
  - b. Identify the virtues associated with this new identity (9).
    - i. The "fruit of the Spirit" is the outworking of your new life in Christ.
      1. Galatians 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."
      2. The fact that these virtues are fruits clarifies that they are by-products of being Christians and not a set of prerequisites for finding acceptance with God.
    - ii. Goodness is a fruit that the Holy Spirit seeks to produce in a believer's life because God is good.
      1. Psalm 118:1 "Give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: because his mercy endureth forever."
    - iii. Righteousness is another attribute of God that is also a characteristic of our new nature (4:24).
      1. Deuteronomy 32:4 "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."
      2. Romans 6:13 "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."
      3. The believer's growth to maturity entails a progressive transformation from unrighteous behavior to righteous conduct.
    - iv. Truth is an additional attribute of God that should characterize the speech and lifestyle of every believer.
      1. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;"
      2. Believers are to live in accordance with the truth because at conversion we were created like God in truth (4:24).
  - c. Develop discernment to know how to act in any situation in accordance with these spiritual realities (10).
    - i. As our minds are renewed by God's Word, we can discern God's will for our lives.

1. Romans 12:1-2 "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that God, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."
- ii. The principal criterion for us is to discern and live in a way that is "acceptable unto the Lord."
  1. 2 Corinthians 5:9 "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."
  2. We cannot know what is acceptable to God without a growing understanding and application of God's Word to our lives.
3. Expose the sins of fellow believers (11-14).
  - a. We expose sin by refusing to participate in the shamefulness of sin (11-12).
    - i. We are not to avoid relationships with unbelievers, but we are to avoid participating in the kinds of behaviors they do that displease God (11).
      1. The "unfruitful works of darkness" stand in sharp contrast to the fruits of the Spirit.
      2. Romans 13:12 "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."
      3. These works of darkness would include sexual immorality, greed, and filthy talk (3-5).
    - ii. As believers grow in Christ, the process of renewal and taking off the old self involves eliminating lifestyles and behaviors that were typical of our pre-Christian lives but are shameful and inappropriate for our new life in Christ (12).
      1. Christians must be very careful of living double lives, living one way around believers, but secretly indulging in the sins of the old life.
      2. Sexual sin is first on Paul's list of behaviors that we are to avoid and not make excuses for.
  - b. Exposing sin is a critical component of the process of Christian maturity (13-14a).
    - i. Believers are to expose and reprove these secret sins by proclaiming the truth to one another.
    - ii. Believers have a responsibility not only to live in accordance with their new identity, but also to help their fellow believers deal with the dark and sinful tendencies in their lives.
    - iii. Exposing these dark practices and behaviors is the first step in helping fellow Christians grow to maturity in Christ.
  - c. Paul makes a strong appeal to sinning Christians (14b).
    - i. Leave a lifestyle of sin (14c-d).
      1. Believers are to awake from spiritual slumber.
      2. 1 Thessalonians 5:5 "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For god hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."
      3. Believers are to consider themselves alive to God and dead to the power of sin.
      4. Romans 6:11-13 "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."
    - ii. Receive Christ's presence and help (14e).
      1. John 8:12 Then spake Jesus unto them saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."
      2. When we have to expose sin, Christ is present with us to sustain us and help us.

Conclusion:

1. Do you have a new identity in Christ?
2. Are you living in the light of your new identity in Christ?
3. Are you developing the ability to discern God's will?
4. Are you living to please God, or those around you?
5. Does your lifestyle expose sin by contrast?
6. Are you willing to shine brightly for Christ even when it means exposing the sin of another believer?