

Are You Light In The Lord?

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Light reveals God and it produces fruit; but light also exposes what is wrong. How could an artist paint a true picture in darkness? How could an ophthalmologist find out what is wrong with a person's sight without shining a light in the eye? How could a surgeon remove cancer in darkness? Light reveals the truth, and exposes the true character of things.

I find it very interesting that, in the last couple of weeks, this section of Scripture has been danced around and danced in at least three times, in messages that we have had. I feel very strongly that God wants us to take a close look at this, and what I am going to give you today is maybe a little more detailed on this segment of what Paul wrote.

The apostle Paul explains why the unbeliever, or the non-Christian, stays clear of the church and the Bible; they will avoid it at all costs. God's light reveals his true character, and the exposure is not very complimentary. In contrast, as we walk in the light we refuse to fellowship with the darkness, and we expose the dark things of sin for what they really are, just by our very lives, and this is why we are going to be seeing more persecution of those who follow the Christian way.

Ephesians 5:8-11 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

In verse 8, the apostle Paul reminded the Ephesians of what they once were—'you were once darkness.' Next, he proceeds to remind them—'now you are light in the Lord.'

What Paul is describing here is not only the difference between the Christian and the person who is blatantly and obviously not a Christian, but the difference also between the person who is a true Christian, a true believer, and 'light in the Lord,' and the so-called good, moral person, who is not a Christian. Sometimes those lines get blurred, especially from people in the world.

This becomes important because of verse 9, where we are told that 'the fruit of the Spirit

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is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.' But there is a type of person found in the world who is not a Christian, who tells us he is not a Christian, and who almost boasts of the fact that he is not a Christian. On the surface he seems to be a good and moral person and he seems interested in truth and in integrity, in other words he is 'a good pagan,' if we can use that phrase. I am using the word 'good' there very loosely, as the world does.

He may be a religious person, because you can be religious without being a Christian, and it is very important to differentiate between these two. It is only as we see the characteristics of the light that we begin to be able to draw these all-important distinctions, because the Christian is not merely a person who has received a certain amount of enlightenment, he is light; 'but now you are light in the Lord.' We are 'light in the Lord' because Christ dwells in us and we live God's way of life. If we do not live God's way of life then the light is not in us, and the ramifications are eternal.

So the question is: how does this light manifest itself?

First and foremost, it does so in the mind. Biblical truth comes primarily to the mind, to the intellect, and to the understanding; it is not some sort of vague feeling people get. Vague feelings may have nothing to do with Christianity at all. This is always a matter of truth, so we start with the mind. And the first thing we see about ourselves as Christians is that we show that, since we have become 'light in the Lord' we have a knowledge that we lacked before.

Darkness is characterized by ignorance: light is characterized by knowledge and understanding and, above all, by a knowledge of God; not merely a knowledge about certain things concerning God, or a knowledge about God's existence. It is not a knowledge that is accessible to everyone, but uniquely to the Christian.

But the Christian has a further knowledge. We are in the position described by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John:

John 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Yes, it includes a knowledge about God; but it goes beyond that, it includes a reverence and a knowledge of God open only to the Christian, and that all others in the world lack. Things become very exciting for us in God's church because we have that mystery, that uniqueness that other people seek, but they are in darkness and cannot find it.

The spiritual faculty is the thing that differentiates us, as Christians, from everybody else. It gives us an insight into, and an understanding and respect of, spiritual truth. But all non-Christians lack this. They have minds and they have intellects. If you present them with a secular situation they can understand it and can reason about it. There is no shortage of intellect, there is no shortage of what we might call brain power there.

They can do the same thing with poetry, music, science, and most other secular subjects. But when you present the spiritual truth of the Bible to them, they have no faculty that enables them to truly understand. They see little or nothing of any value in it. It is foolishness to them, it seems like a lot of nonsense to them, and they shrug it off. There are a lot of people like that, many of which end up in the media. There also seems to be a great concentration of people in high positions of government and in the news media who are very intelligent people, but do not have a clue as to how to resolve problems with integrity and truth.

Have you noticed their complete failure to think spiritually? They cannot help it, of course; they are blind, they are lacking in the faculty, they are not 'light in the Lord,'—they are darkness, and it shows in their every comment. They are afflicted by this ignorance, their foolish hearts are darkened, and their confused minds are blinded by the god of this world.

During the Millennium, people will not have to suffer Satan's influence and blinding power, because he will be bound in outer darkness during those 1,000 years. But people will still have to deal with their own human nature, which tends to keep people in darkness. But we are 'light in the Lord' and because of that, we will be helping people out of that darkness in a global way during the Millennium. It is very important for us to prepare now.

Belief in Christ, and God's truth, is not a question of intellectual capacity at all. People think that certain persons are not Christians because of their great brains, their great intellectual capacity. Even some Christians tend to think like that, and are troubled by the fact that these great intellects are not Christians. It does not matter how perfect the instrument is, if it lacks this spiritual quality, this spiritual ability, it amounts to nothing at all. 'The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.' He is 'darkness,' he is not 'light in the Lord.'

But the moment we become a Christian, the first thing that we become aware of is that we have been given a spiritual power. We now possess an understanding in the realm where formerly we were a stranger and felt ourselves to be an outsider. We begin to have a reverence of God and a respect for His truth. So this spiritual power—the Holy

Spirit—infuses us with this light.

Because we are Christians, we are 'light in the Lord' and we have an understanding and an anxiety of the fact of sin. Non-Christians do not know what it means to be a sinner; the whole idea seems to be ridiculous to them. God has instilled in every person, from creation, a general understanding of right and wrong. They explain the whole of conduct in terms of environment, heredity, a bad gene or upbringing, and things like that. They are not aware of the fact that there is a principle of evil in humans that debases all his judgments, a bias, a tendency towards evil.

Paul calls it a 'law in our members,' always trying to drag us down. It means nothing to them; they know nothing about a spiritual conflict within. But when a person is called and reacts positively and faithfully by accepting Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, by repenting, by being baptized and by receiving the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, he becomes aware that he is the seat of this tremendous battle and fight. He is aware that he is a sort of enigma. He is aware of these forces struggling within him. We are supposed to reflect the light, and with Christ dwelling in us we are that light. Of course we cannot fully be that light until we become spirit beings, but we are beginning to use that light now as a witness to others.

The person who is 'light in the Lord' is a person who knows the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, and he can explain it to others. This is not merely a teaching of the apostle Paul. The apostle Peter, in his first epistle says the same thing:

I Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

This is very important today and it is going to be even more important to have a reason for the hope that is in you at the beginning of the Millennium, when we begin to rule in that light.

The Christian can do that because he has an understanding of the one and only way of salvation. The Christian is a person who comes to it with a new mind, he is 'light in the Lord,' the written Word of God is all important to him. He sees this extraordinary truth in it, and he has an increasing understanding of it. We do not learn everything all at one time when we come into the church, in fact it takes a lifetime to absorb and internalize, and get these things set in our heart.

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In addition, the Christian not only has this new understanding and reverence, but he has a heart that can respond to it, and this distinguishes him from the non-Christian. Some seem to be so inclined that they can take a kind of intellectual interest in the Bible, but their hearts do not respond to it in a way that motivates them to do anything about it. Certain people are interested in the Bible as literature, or as philosophy, and so on. But they are not gripped and moved by the truth.

But a person who is 'light in the Lord,' has a heart that is light. And he is someone who feels the power of the truth. 'You shall know the truth and the truth will make you free.' So it is a foundational part of the Christian. He feels the power of the Word, and is moved by it. The apostle Paul put it this way:

Romans 6:17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

Without that obeying from the heart now, no one will be a ruler in the Millennium.

So the Christian is a person who 'obeys from the heart,' the person who has light in his heart.

He is not totally sinless and he is not perfect, but though he occasionally sins he desires holiness, he hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

He seeks for it and the Kingdom of God. He wants to be in the Family of God. The desire of his heart is to know God the Father and His Son, and to live as they do. His heart has become 'light in the Lord.' So we begin to see the strong link that there is between the Christian and God the Father and Jesus Christ. We know that the power of the Holy Spirit, the mind of God, dwells in us, and that is our link. Another word for that spirit is light.

Let us consider the aspect of the will. This is the area that the apostle Paul is especially concerned about in this section of Ephesians 5. Here, we come to character as it shows itself in expression, that is in action.

Ephesians 5:9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth)

In one respect, this translation in the King James Version and the New King James

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Version is not exact. The translation most in accordance with the best manuscripts is: 'The fruit of light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.' Both the English Standard Version and the New International Version translate it this way. Of course, it amounts generally to the same thing; it is the Spirit that provides light, there is no light apart from it, and so it is not surprising that the Spirit is used here. We can take it either way: 'fruit of the Spirit,' or 'fruit of the light;' it is equally true in both cases.

The characteristic and significant word in relation to 'darkness' is 'works.'

Ephesians 5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

He does not say the unfruitful fruit of darkness, but the unfruitful works of darkness. But when Paul speaks of the light and the manifestations of light, he no longer speaks of 'works,' but of 'fruit.' So, what is the significance of this change in the use of terms, contrasting 'the fruit of the light' with the 'works of darkness?'

The great characteristic of the life of the true Christian is good fruit, and this tells us that it is only when a person becomes a Christian that he really becomes true. It is only the Christian who begins to approximate to what a person is meant to be, that is to say, what man was when God first created him. He was made and created in the image of God, he was made upright. But as a result of his sin he perverted what God had made true. The trouble with man in sin is that he is false in the way that he lives his life.

One of the greatest depictions of 'the true,' of 'the real,' in the whole Bible is in Psalm 104, regarding God's original Creation.

Psalm 104:1-35 Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, who makes the clouds His chariot, who walks on the wings of the wind, who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire. You who laid the foundations of the earth, so that it should not be moved forever, You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled; at the voice of Your thunder they hastened away. They went up over the mountains; they went down into the valleys, to the place which You founded for them. You have set a boundary that they may not pass over, that they may not return to cover the earth. He sends the springs into the valleys, they

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flow among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. By them the birds of the heavens have their home; they sing among the branches. He waters the hills from His upper chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart. The trees of the LOORD are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He planted, where the birds make their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees. The high hills are for the wild goats; the cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers. He appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knows its going down. You make darkness, and it is night, in which all the beasts of the forest creep about. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God. When the sun rises, they gather together and lie down in their dens. Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening. O LOORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions—This great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; there is that Leviathan which You have made to play there. These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good. You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth. May the glory of the LOORD endure forever; may the LOORD rejoice in His works. He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the hills, and they smoke. I will sing to the LOORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the LOORD. May sinners be consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more. Bless the LOORD, O my soul! Praise the LOORD!

We see there how perfectly He created it and how perfectly everything went together. But man came along and started to destroy, distort, and pollute the environment. At the beginning of the Millennium this is what it is going to be like again, but God will put things back into balance. It will take the power of God to do that.

The psalmist is speaking of creation, of course, and telling us how everything displays the glory of God: the mountains, the rivers, the birds, the trees, and so on. And then having described the various works of creation, he looks at man, and he feels there is only one point to make about him here at the end of the psalm: 'May sinners be

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consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more.' Why? Because of man's perverted way and what he has done to the earth.

Because the sinner is a monstrosity in God's universe, he has become false. But when a man becomes a Christian, the first thing is that he begins to become true, and he begins to function as he was meant to do. Man was not originally created in his sinful state. Each individual has done that, and it is not a case of Adam and Eve sinned and everyone else is under that sin. Each and every one of us has to bear our own sins, but thanks to Jesus Christ and His sacrifice we have been forgiven.

The purpose of a fruit tree is to produce fruit; that is the true order. But how often do we think of the Christian in these terms? On the other hand, non-Christians, unbelievers are false, they are monstrosities, and they do works of darkness. The blessing and cursing chapter (Deuteronomy 28) is basically promising blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience—the choice to live in light or darkness. As we know, the world has chosen the cursed side.

There is never anything artificial, mechanical, or machine-like about the life of a Christian. His life is similar to the way fruit grows on a tree. We should never give the appearance of being machine-like, or machine produced, but we should be true and genuine, which leads to being loving, righteous, and true.

Christians cannot be instantly 'produced to order,' neither can our life or activities and actions. There is an important distinction here. It is here that we see the real difference between Christian behavior and living on the one hand, and the kind of conduct and behavior that characterizes the devotees of the false religions on the other. The members of false religions are always machine-made, they are always externally 'produced to order.'

A Christian should not give the impression that he has merely placed things on the outside. His life is comparable to a true living tree, whereas, the life of false religionists, or religious hobbyists, resembles a Christmas tree. In the case of the Christmas tree, people have to hang the fruit on it—the gifts and the presents. It is an artificial or dead false tree, and a deceptive tree.

But the characteristic of the real live true tree is that the fruit grows out of it, you do not hang it onto the branches. So the Christian and his manner of life should not give the impression of charming people. He should not wear religion as a banner or flag that is waved to proclaim his own righteousness.

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People of false religions always let you know what good and wonderful works they have done. It is not that it is wrong for people to find out, it is the attitude involved—what is the motivation? Why was it done? They proclaim their good conduct and behavior and things they have overcome to all, so it is only a cloak worn on the surface hiding what really lies beneath the skin—the false heart.

Christians should not be this way. God has not granted us liberty so that we may feel free to break His laws, but there are consequences as we read in Deuteronomy. He has granted us liberty so that we may live our lives in service and genuine devotion to Him, and be of benefit to others. So, we have that choice.

I Peter 2:15-16 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

False religion falsely simulates reality. The technology today to reproduce certain things is quite impressive. It is very difficult at times to tell the difference between a living flower and an artificial one, especially from a distance.

People are very clever; they can make an artificial rose that looks so real, at first glance, it can almost deceive an expert. Satan becomes an angel of light, and he counterfeits the true, but it is still artificial, it is still without life, it is something manufactured and copied. We should never give that impression. Our fruit is to be the fruit of truth, the fruit of the Spirit, and the 'the fruit of light!'

To carry the analogy further, there should always be at least an indication of the element of steady growth and of development in the life of the Christian. Without forcing the analogy, let us continue to look at it in terms of this true fruit tree. You go to bed one night, having looked at the tree just before you went in, and there it was, just the branches and the leaves, nothing more. Next morning you get up and open your door and go out into your garden, and there you see the tree covered, teeming, with fruit fully developed. But that never happens, does it?

You get buds, later you see flowers, then you get just a hint that fruit is on the way; then that fruit begins to develop until finally it reaches maturity. That is the Christian—the fruit! It does not happen suddenly, it is not something artificial hung on the branches overnight. It is not ready-made.

There is only an appearance of true Christianity. True Christianity produces genuine

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true fruit, and in its production there is always the element of growth and of development, leading to spiritual maturity.

While all fruit is essentially the same, it is equally true to say that there are always individual differences. Look at an apple tree teeming with apples. Even though they are all apples, they are not all identical in shape, or in color. There is a little more red in one, a little less in another, and so on. There are all sorts of minor differences and variations in the fruit.

And this is always the characteristic of true Christians. But it is not characteristic of the followers and the devotees of false religions. They are always the same, they are mass-produced counterfeits.

Christians are fruit, the fruit of the light! We are called into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We have true life, we are true fruit, and one of our characteristics is the liberty that leads to true variety and variation.

As fellow members of God's church we should never expect everybody to fit into our mold, or our idea of what should be.

What makes up liberty?

John 8:34-36 Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

Sin is the power that enslaves us in bondage; but liberty consists of more than external freedom, or in having the power of choice; it also consists of deliverance from the darkening of the mind. Liberty consists of deliverance from the oppression of sinful lusts and the attraction of the will, induced by wrong desire. In a positive respect, liberty relies on the possession of holiness, with the will and ability to do what is right, good and true. This God-given liberty is possible only in a renewed condition of the mind, and cannot exist apart from godliness.

The instrument through which this liberty is imparted is 'the truth.' In John 8:32, Jesus told the Jews who believed Him, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

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The main hindrance liberty has is what comes from the nature and intrinsic quality of the person granted the liberty. The main thing that stops a person from abusing liberty, and doing something wrong, is his integrity, morality, and righteousness.

Here is an illustration. Water flows freely, or has liberty to flow down the channel of the river, when there is no impediment across and in the river, but the banks are impediments to the water, keeping it from ascending over them; and as long as there is no conflict, the water can flow freely down the river in a narrow and definite direction. But unlike people the water never says it wants the liberty to ascend, but the ability or power to flow down the river. This is because the incapability to ascend over the banks is in the nature of the water.

Jesus Christ has made us free—He has given us liberty—by giving us the knowledge of God's truth through the power of His Holy Spirit. That is what gives us the internal governor to properly and righteously use the liberty we have been given.

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Now back to the fruit of light analogy. Fruit always comes from the inside outwards. In a sense, fruit is an expression of the life of the tree that produces it. It is something that comes out of the character, out of the life! It is the same way with the Christian. Fruit always comes from within and is the expression of the true nature.

Ephesians 5:8-9 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Let us go a little further and emphasize that not only must we not allow other people to dictate to us and to impose things upon us, we should not do anything solely in terms of our own mind and our own understanding either. Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 say, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

God has put certain principles within us. The light of the mind and heart and will, that is, the dynamo, is the thing that gets us going, the pressure from within. And what we are called upon to do is to cultivate the heart and mind. If we cultivate it truly, the fruit will appear; the conduct, the behavior, the work, and all these other things, will come out of it.

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The apostle Paul puts it in writing to Timothy, that it is our responsibility to see that we are vessels that are fit for the Master's use.

II Timothy 2:20-21 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

Our duty is to be vessels that are fit for God's use. In a sense, we are both vessels and we are living trees with the nutriment, the sap, and the life. Jesus Christ is our Master and He is the Vine, and we are the branches. As long as we look at the truth in this way, we should be able to avoid most of the pitfalls that are so dangerous to us, and to the whole Church.

The millennial vision is specifically an agrarian vision of cultivated land that produces crops. It will be a golden age where farmers experience reward for their toil. It is full of richness.

Amos 9:13-15 Behold, the days are coming," says the LOORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," Says the LOORD your God.

The people of that new age will be radiant over the goodness of the LOORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and their life will be like a watered garden, according to Jeremiah and Joel.

It is a vision of abundance. Everywhere there will be overflowing energy and abundance. It is a time of earthly prosperity par excellence. Isaiah says God promises to extend prosperity like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream. Ezekiel prophesies that God promises to provide prosperous plantations so that people will not have to be hungry anymore. That will be made possible by fruit that is produced by light.

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Remember the apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 5:8, that we as Christian's are people who are 'light in the Lord,' and in verse 9, we find him telling us that the light shows itself in certain ways, "for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth." He seems here to be holding a prism under the light. And what the prism does, of course, is to break up the light into its component parts. The word "prism" defined:

In optics, a prism is a transparent optical element with flat, polished surfaces that refract light. The exact angles between the surfaces depend on the application. The traditional geometrical shape is that of a triangular prism with a triangular base and rectangular sides, and in colloquial use "prism" usually refers to this type of a glass object.

How do prisms work?

Light changes speed as it moves from one medium to another (for example, from air into the glass of the prism). This speed change causes the light to be refracted and to enter the new medium at a different angle. The degree of bending of the light's path depends on the angle that the incident beam of light makes with the surface, and on the ratio between the refractive indices of the two media. The refractive index of many materials (such as glass) varies with the wavelength or color of the light used, a phenomenon known as dispersion. This causes light of different colors to be refracted differently and to leave the prism at different angles, creating an effect similar to a rainbow. This effect can be used to separate a beam of white light into its constituent spectrum of colors. Color is the visible manifestation of light's wavelength.

So light produces a sort of spectrum that Paul demonstrates in the words, 'in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.' We read his actual exhortation in Ephesians 5:

Ephesians 5:8-10 but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth,) finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

So we do not become forgetful of the characteristics of the light, he divides it up for us here (in a parenthesis) as a prism divides the natural light, into goodness, righteousness, and truth—all goodness, all righteousness, and all truth—and we have to

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look carefully at these three very important words.

Ephesians 5:9 'The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.'

The first word is goodness, and then comes righteousness. Paul was very much interested in these two words, and he often puts them together. For example, in Romans 5, although they are there in a different order. He is showing how 'God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' That, he says, is truly amazing because you do not find that sort of thing among people. And then he puts it like this in Romans 5:

Romans 5:7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

There he takes the righteous man first and then mentions the good man; but in Ephesians he starts with the good man and continues with the righteous man. The order of the two terms is not the same in both cases, and Paul always has a good reason for this. Paul is working up toward something in Romans 5, but in Ephesians he is from above downwards; so he starts with the word goodness.

What is goodness? Here is a word that we tend to use thoughtlessly and casually, but it is a very a wonderful word. Goodness is one of the characteristics of God Himself. 'God is good to all.' 'The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.' Paul somewhat defines it in Romans 2:

Romans 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

We see there that there is a definite and primary spiritual context given.

Goodness means benevolence. It is always indicative of a perfect blend in the various parts of the personality. A good man (or woman) is a perfectly blended person, a man who exemplifies all that is noble and who does excellent works harmoniously together.

His various attributes, and his personality, are seen as perfectly combined. And the

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result of this is that he is a man who is concerned to promote the happiness of all around him. He is not selfish, not self-centered, but because he has this blend himself he is concerned about others.

It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance; it is God looking on our misery, our unhappiness, and all that is true of us as the result of sin. God is good to everyone; He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends His rain on the just and unjust. Although people are evil and unjust, He does this for them anyway. In a general sense, He gives them what they need to survive. But for those who are in the light of the Lord, or course we get greater spiritual blessings, so that we can improve in character and in our work as a witness to the world.

In people, we see a very pale reflection of the same thing. The good man is a man who thinks about love and beauty and truth. He is concerned about others and does not like to see their suffering; so he tries to alleviate suffering and to diminish wrongs. There are some very, very caring people out there in the world. He is always looking for opportunities to do this, his heart is full of benevolence, and he is concerned about benefiting others. It is a complete contrast to the unfruitful works of darkness, which are of no benefit or value to anyone at all.

The sinner is no benefactor, he is purely selfish, he is out to satisfy and gratify his own lusts and desires. His attitude is "I must have it! I want it, and I want it now!"

The first thing you see as you hold up the prism to the light is that the man who is 'light' is full of goodness—this thing that goes out to others and is concerned about helping them and improving their condition.

God is good to all. And the Christian in turn should be good to everyone as well.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

The person who follows and obeys and lives according to Christ's teachings becomes 'light in the Lord.'

Matthew 5:14-16 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so

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shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

God and Jesus Christ are the source of the light. Christ is the 'light of the world' and since His Spirit dwells in every Christian, we are also (in a secondary way) 'the light of the world.' As God is good to everyone, we must be good to all in the same way. We must shine through goodness and good works!

The apostle Paul's second word is 'righteousness.'

Ephesians 5:9 'The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.'

Righteousness differs from goodness in that it brings in legal ideas and conceptions. It means conformity to law, and is a narrower term than goodness.

Righteousness is something that you think of in terms of the prescriptions and the demands of a law, and conformity to that law. It means more than just uprightness, and a manifesting of justice; it means in fact being right with God. You test the rightness, the uprightness, of a wall or a door by using a plumb line. That is the general idea of righteousness.

The apostle Paul is saying that righteousness is the characteristic of the Christian. He is right and just in and of himself: in his own handling of himself, what he does is upright and just, and he is fair also in his treatment of others; he never violates the rules or the laws with regard to them. He never does them any wrong; and he respects their rights and possessions. Of course this is what we are all trying to attain to. We all have our faults and we are all trying to work through them, and overcome.

In other words, we can think of righteousness in terms of the Ten Commandments, and what we are told about not coveting the things that belong to others. The person who has who has the full spectrum of light in him is never guilty of coveting his neighbor's possessions and rights.

He is not governed by his impulses and his desires, he wants to know what is right, what is just, what is equitable, what is really fair to his fellow-man. He loves his neighbor as himself. Righteousness lies in a perfect conformity to the law, not to the letter only, but also to the spirit.

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A common characteristic of the non-Christian's life is lawlessness, every man for himself, with no thought of caring about other people's rights. We see a lot of this in the life of society today. In fact, most of the troubles and problems that are confronting the politicians and others are due to an absence of goodness, righteousness, and truth. These three always seem to go together.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

The absence of godliness is always accompanied by the absence of righteousness. There is no greater fallacy than that which has characterized the immoral teaching of the last 120 years or so, namely, that you could shed the godliness and still hold on to the righteousness; that you could dismiss the Bible, but still get the conduct that the Bible promotes. Understanding of morality has reached such a low level that people think that they can remove the Ten Commandments from society and still have goodness and uprightness. It just cannot happen. So we see the good pagan out there. A good pagan is by worldly standards only good according to the world. Many times he appears as the good "Christian" from the outside, but he is the Christmas tree.

So Paul is reminding the Ephesian believers, and us today, in Ephesians 5, to come back to God, to have this light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, shining in our hearts. This leads not only to the goodness that characterizes God Himself, but in turn leads to righteousness in character and in conduct in every sphere of life.

In other words, the Christian is a person whose life is governed by principles. He knows what he is doing, and he knows why he is doing it. He is not just conforming to a pattern, he has reasons, he is working out his total commitments, he is a righteous person because he knows that the law of God is perfect and right, converting the heart and mind. Moses ascribes these qualities, these attributes to the Source, to God Himself

Deuteronomy 32:3-4 For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.

The apostle Paul's third word is 'truth.' This of course is a very important and vital

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element. By 'truth,' in this context, Paul is referring to a series of contrasts with what he has been saying about the non-Christian life.

Ephesians 5:9 for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth

In verse 12, we are told that 'it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret;' elsewhere Paul talks about the 'hidden things of darkness.' These are one and the same.

Truth is the exact opposite of all these types of things. The characteristic of the life of the Christian is that there is no deceit in it, nothing hidden, or underhanded or dishonest, nothing that stinks of hypocrisy or pretense. Truth's characteristics are that it is open and transparent, and that has to be the hardest thing for human nature to allow to happen.

As Paul points out in verse 13, 'all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.'

That is not the best translation, but there is that meaning to it. You cannot conceal anything when light comes. Imagine that you are walking along a dark country road. Suddenly a car comes with its headlights ablaze, and at once everything becomes visible, and you see all sorts of creeping things disappearing into the shadows.

Light exposes everything, and that is the effect of truth within the personality. The Christian is an open person, who has nothing to conceal or to hide. He does not pretend to be something that he is not. He is what he is by the grace of God, very different from that other type of person, whose whole life is lived in deceit. The non-Christian trusts nobody, and nobody trusts him; you cannot believe him, you never know when he is speaking the truth. And, he cannot even trust himself to look after his own body; just look at the health of this world.

Adam and Eve, after they had sinned, covered themselves with fig leaves and went behind the trees of the Garden to hide themselves from God, and the ungodly person still does the same thing in his own way. That is always the characteristic of the life of sin—hidden! Untrustworthy! Deceitful!

But the Christian is the exact opposite of all this, there is transparency about him; he is completely aboveboard, he is not hiding anything, there is no pretense, he is sincere.

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These qualities come from God who is the source of and the essence of light.

I John 1:5-8 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and 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 Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

The Christian is what he is because of the grace and truth of God. This truth has entered him and governs him; so his life is characterized by truth in all its varied and glorious manifestations.

We can sum up the light by saying that it is the most beneficent thing in the world. It is a wonderful thing in and of itself. It does a tremendous amount of good. Nobody likes a foggy day, but we glory in the light and the sunshine.

We must never forget that we are God's workmanship, created new in Jesus Christ for good works. We must be 'light in the Lord;' and when this happens we produce spiritual fruit. We are branches of the true Vine, and are meant to produce the fruit of light to the glory of God.

The fruit of light is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. You are the 'light in the Lord.' 'Walk as children of light.' If we do this, we will have the opportunity of ruling with light in the Millennium. We will shine with Jesus Christ and God the Father, and shed light on the truth, and help individuals coming out of the tribulation. In the Millennium we will be able to help rule them with light.