

LIGHT WALK

(Ephesians 5) So here we are on the other side of Easter and I see some of the Easter crowd came back. It's amazing isn't it who will come to church on Easter? We were going over the visitors list on Monday in our staff meeting and we came to one name that we recognized. We knew this person had been here before. Her name is Bunny and according to our records she last came just less than a year ago on guess which day? You guessed it. It appears our church has its very own uh, Easter uh, uh, visitor. Ladies and Gentleman, boys and girls, today marks our return to studying the letter of the Apostle Paul to the church at Ephesus, a study that should take us through the end of 1997. When we left our study in Dec of last year we had just finished chapter 5:5-6 which give us a much needed word for the modern church because it is a bold word, a tough word for a weak and wimpy church that pathetically craves acceptability in the eyes of a sinsick world. **5-6** *For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.* ⁶ *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.* Now that last thought is a plain and simple one that should be easy enough for us to apply to our lives. If immorality, impurity, and coveting draw the fire of God's wrath then we should what? It seems too obvious to mention but Paul won't risk giving us the opportunity. He says **7** *Therefore do not be partakers with them.* To me the depth of our depravity as human beings can be seen in the utterly mindless way we walk ourselves into the very same traps that we just saw our friends and parents and brothers and sister get caught in. We watch smokers get lung cancer and ask for a cigarette. We watch drinkers lose their families and we ask for another beer. We watch pot smokers fry their brains and we ask for a joint. We watch the promiscuous get an STD and we look for the same fun time. Friend, this is craziness. This is bondage to our lusts, to our sin. Steve Schwambach says that wisdom will note the place where God's fist comes down and will avoid that place. Scripture tells us where that place is, marks it with a big red X and puts caution signs all around it, but somehow we go there anyway. Do you know why? One big reason is that there are a lot of nice people there, so we think, and in our emotionally needy condition we search desperately for some people who

will affirm us, approve us, include us. And that search leads to our death. Paul says of the worldly, “they are standing on the red X” 7 *Therefore do not be partakers with them.*

More reasons are coming 8 *for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.* Our first heading for today’s outline is “the light walk.” ® The basic exhortation here is to live out in practice what you have been constituted by the grace of Christ Jesus. If you are a Christian, God has worked a miracle in your soul. He has transformed you from darkness to light. The verse says that you were formerly darkness but now you are light and do you know how that happened? Read Genesis chapter one. Have you read it before? Then you know how this happens. Genesis 1:2ab *The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep.* There was a time when everything was dark and what changed that? Did Adam ask Jesus into his heart and boom the light came? I don’t think so. What power is there that can turn darkness into light? It is the decreative word of God that going forth accomplishes all its intended purpose. God said, “Let there be light” and there was light. And it is that same power of God that speaks His transforming word into heart of every born again child of God. God does it. In our study of Ephesians we have seen this several times how the apostle makes use of before and after images to communicate the marvelous saving work of Christ. He said to us back in chapter 2 that we were dead but God made us alive. He said that we were far off but God drew us near. And here He says that we were darkness but God made us light. It is true my brothers and sisters that the New Testament anticipates that Christians will continue to commit sins. We are not totally saved until the day of resurrection but I fear that we often find too much carnal comfort in that doctrine and fail to recognize sufficiently the transformation that God has wrought in us. We are not what we were. And this change is not an evolution but a revolution. There is no middle ground here. There is an old me and a new me. And therefore we would expect that there would be an old walk and a new walk. A dark walk and a light walk.

If you have read the New Testament at all you are familiar with the theme of darkness and light. The devil is called the prince of darkness, Jesus is called the light of the world. And the followers of Jesus become (excuse me George W) like a thousand points of light, reflecting the brilliance of our Savior. This has big implications for how we live. John 8:12 *I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.* The

Lord uses this term “light” to refer to one of the great benefits of salvation because what does light do? Light enables us to perceive reality. It enables us to see what is really there. And spiritually speaking it means that we can see the realities of God’s kingdom. Jesus says that all his followers have that kind of light, live in that kind of light. And the exhortation of our text is to walk like people of light. We don’t have to bang our shins on the coffee tables of earthly deception. We don’t have to fall into the traps set out by the enemy of our souls. We are not meant to walk in darkness. I remember when our family first moved from our apartment in Melbourne, Florida to a house in a newly developed area. We had been used to going out for evening walks around our apartment, but the first night we went for a walk around our new neighborhood you know what we discovered? You could not see where we were living. It was too dark for walks. (possible insert Belgian story) To walk, at least to walk safely and confidently, you need to walk in the light. That is the exhortation of our passage and it simply calls us Christians to live according to what we are. It is an invitation to what I like to call “gospel obedience.” I love that term “gospel obedience.” It distinguishes the obedience of grateful response from that of desperate striving. I mean that there is a type of obedience to God’s law that is rooted in one’s emptiness, that hopes to find favor, to find blessing by doing what the rules say to do. That kind of thing is perfectly futile. But there is another type of obedience that is simply a grateful, reasonable response to the favor, the blessing, the salvation or the light that God has already freely bestowed. The New Testament says that God graciously floods our souls with light and the least we can do is walk in the insight it gives. What that means practically is what we need to look at now. 8c,9

We are into major heading #2 which is light fruit ☺. Now this concept of fruit is again, a very common one in the New Testament Scriptures and it is used to describe that which is produced freely and naturally from the energy of something else. Now, in the New Testament, fruit refers to the qualities of a godly life. But how do you come to live such a godly life? By concentrating primarily on the outward deeds of obedience? No. That’s a mistake far too many will make. To produce oranges your concentration needs to be on the tree, to make sure your tree is properly planted and nourished and protected. Healthy fruit flows from a healthy root and if the fruit of the light is going to be there in your life then what has to be there first is the light. And the light is named Jesus. It is Christ first, conduct second. Your obedience flows from your relationship. To get that backward is a sure road to failure. Many of you have been

trying to put the spiritual cart before the spiritual horse. You have been trying to do stuff for Jesus before you have let Jesus do stuff in you. And it won't work. Any goodness you obtain that does not flow out of faith in and love for Jesus Christ will be superficial and fragmentary. I trust you see that. Now let's look at the nature of this light fruit. It is described by three terms: goodness, righteousness and truth. The fruit or the result of having light in your soul is what? The fruit of being spiritually enlightened is what? Is it that you can name and define all the gifts of the Spirit? Is it that you can name and define all the five points of Calvinism? Is it that you can pass into a state of ecstasy while you are worshipping? Is it that you can prophesy and perform miracles? It is none of these things. No, no. The fruit of the light is neither intellectual or experiential. It is moral. It consists of goodness, righteousness, and truth. Goodness speaks more of the heart and the disposition, righteousness more of the behavior, truth more of one's thinking and one's speech. I would not make too much of the distinctions however. These three are all closely related. James Hastings says, "At the bottom righteousness and goodness are one. Each is the counterface and complement of the other. Righteousness is to goodness as the strong backbone of principle, the firm hand and the vigorous grip of duty, the steadfast foot that plants itself on eternal ground. Goodness without righteousness is a weak and fitful sentiment. Righteousness without goodness is a dead formality." It is right attitude, right conduct, right speech. Think about it. This is the fruit of the light. So many people consider themselves spiritually enlightened because they know more than others. Far be it from me to put down knowledge, but God's word says that isn't what counts. If your knowledge doesn't lead to goodness, righteousness and truth it's worth nothing. Other people think that they are enlightened because they have had spiritual experiences. They've spoken in tongues, had dreams, been slain in the spirit - but again those aren't the things that count. It is regular ole nuts and bolts, Thursday morning type righteousness that tells the truth and helps a neighbor and forgives. This is the fruit of the light of Christ present in the soul of man.

We do have a third point to press home today. Our third major heading is actually given here as the primary indicator of what it means to walk as a child of light. My translation offers verse 9 as a parenthetical remark, but the main line of thought continues in **10** *trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord*. If you go back to verse 9 you hear the Lord saying, "Walk as children of light trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." Mark this third point down as light learning. Paul says that to walk in the light means that you are going to be a student of

something and what is that something? You are going to study how to please the One who has saved you. Listen, if you really believe the gospel, if you really believe Jesus Christ has died for your sins, given you new life, purchased you a place in heaven then you will have as your primary, and I do mean primary, ambition in life to please Him. The apostle says this is one of the effects of the light. Romans 14:**7,8ab** *For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸ for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord.* That is the new motive for the new man. II Corinthians 5:**9** *we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.* I heard Elizabeth Elliot say one time that the three biggest decisions you make in life are: where you will live, who you will live with and what you will live for.® And Scripturally which of those three is the most important of all? Which of those three decisions is primary? The biggest question of all is what you will live for. The New Testament says that Christians live for the Lord, to please Him. That is our ambition. Granted, we forget that easily enough, often enough. Living for Jesus is terribly contrary to our natural condition in which we care only about our own interests. By nature we live to please ourselves. That is obvious. When we had small children in our home we would often find them squabbling with each other over something and often I would have them stop and ask, “What would Jesus want me to do in this situation?” They hated that. I know the feeling. We so want to have our own way. But if the light of Christ has filled your heart whose pleasure wins out? We live not for self but for Him. That is the orientation of the believer.

But our passage today doesn't say that the fruit of the light is pleasing the Lord does it? It could. But our text points us to one aspect of that Christ-centered lifestyle which is the discovery of how to go about pleasing Christ. Yesterday I married Thad Morris and Kirby Sampson. In our premarital counseling meetings I told them as I do every couple that God has called each of them to become a student of the other. Caring husbands study their wives to learn how to please them. Caring wives do the same with their husbands. And caring Christians do this with the Lord. And what does it look like when you are studying something? What kinds of things do you do when you study? Well, if there is a book on your subject you are going to read that aren't you? You are going to study that book to glean whatever you can from it. And then you are going to find teachers who can further instruct you in your area of study, right? You'll want to learn all you can from the experts. And another thing - if you want to learn about something you will ask questions about it - right? Is it not reasonable to conclude then that

persons trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord will be reading their Bibles, will be sitting under Bible teaching, will be asking some questions? This is one reason why it is so doubtful to me that someone who has been genuinely transformed from darkness to light would not be in church on Sunday morning, would not be reading the word of God, would not care to talk about spiritual things. Where there is no interest in learning what pleases Christ I question if there is any saving light. Paul says to walk in the light and that means you study to know the will of Christ. Are you doing that right now? Can you honestly say this is a mark of your life? We have every encouragement to do this, because Jesus has told us in His word what pleases Him. This is the magnificent thing. We can know God well-enough to know what pleases Him. He has told us that in His word. It isn't hidden, it is revealed to us and it's time you get busy finding out what it is. You open the book with an eager heart asking, "What does God want for my use of time?" Instead of "how much personal pleasure can I squeeze in?" You read the word asking, "how would God want me to spend my money?" Instead of asking, "how much stuff can I squeeze onto my credit card?" You ask, "How would my Lord want me to treat my spouse, my kids, my parents, my friends, my business relations?" Instead of asking, "what can I get from the people in my life?" You ask, "how can I please God in my political activities?" Instead of asking, "what lever do I pull to get the most pork flowing my direction?" Parents, have you tried to learn what kind of father and mother is pleasing to Jesus? Have you? Or do you try to please your kids, yourself, your neighbors? Have you tried to learn what it means to please the Lord as a wife? As a husband? Have you looked into how you may please the Lord as a member of His church? What counts is really not how much you know, but how much you care. Have you made it your ambition to be pleasing to Jesus? If so, I challenge you to commitment, to establish one new discipline in your life - a daily time of Bible study, a better use of travel time, attendance to SS, one Christian book per month - you name what it is but will you show by your life that you are trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.