

INTRODUCTION

Paul has been encouraging the believers at Ephesus to be imitators of God and to walk the pathway of Christian love. He has been spelling it out in detail what this involves and the motivation for living such a life is to remember that those who do not live this way show that they do not belong to Christ's kingdom and therefore they will be shut out from God's presence.

Now Paul turns to remind the believers at Ephesus what they once were and what they are now in comparison.

1. WE WERE DARKNESS BUT NOW WE ARE LIGHT IN THE LORD (v 8)

Before we became Christian and before we knew the love of God in Christ Jesus we were darkness. Now we need to note the words used here, Paul does not say that we were in darkness for Paul is concerned with what we were in our unbelieving state rather than describing what our environment was like. It's not that as unbelievers we were living in darkness but actually we were darkness. We shared in the world's darkness we were partners in the darkness of the world.

The meaning of the word for 'darkness' in the Greek has the sense of 'bearer of darkness' or 'instrument of darkness.' This is a way of expressing the truth that before we came to know Christ then our whole being was corrupted by sin. Even the good that we did was tainted with evil and corruption. But now says Paul and here is the contrast; now we are light in the Lord. Those who put their trust in Christ are now light instead of darkness.

We are transformed by the power of Christ we are now the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). It's not that we have been enlightened but we are now actually light and this light comes as a result of our union with Christ Jesus. While we were darkened we could say that we were darkness in Satan but now we are light in the Lord. We were once under the control influence and domain of Satan that is why we were darkened but now we have come under the influence and control and domain of the Lord Jesus.

How is this possible or how does this take place? It takes place as a result of Christ's love who gave himself for us as a sacrifice to God (v 2). We have come as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit into a relationship with the Lord who lightens our lives with his life. He is after all the light of world and so all who come to experience his light in their lives also become the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). We receive Jesus light and as a result we become light givers. This is a wonderful transformation that takes place in the hearts and lives of all who come to know Christ. This is something that Christ does for us through his death and resurrection. He works a marvellous work of reformation in our hearts and the difference is marked it's as different as light and darkness. You know when a room is dark and when it is full of light.

In the same way you will know when someone is a true Christian and when someone is not or is just pretending. It may not be as clearly seen at the beginning but it will be seen and as we walk the life of love then that contrast between light and darkness will be more clearly seen. You have heard the expression that she brightens up my life, well that should be true of all God's people.

We are light therefore that light ought to be shining out of us people should see by our attitudes and actions and speech that we are different as different as light and darkness. Our conversations and our activity should enlighten the conversations and the activities of the unbelieving world so that people can clearly see there is a marked contrast between us and those of the world.

2. THE IMPLICATIONS OF BEING LIGHT IN THE LORD (vs. 8-14)

What is the consequence of this change from darkness to light?

a) It is that we now live (or walk) as children of the light (v 8) - Let me just remind you again that Paul likes to describe the Christian life in terms of slow but steady progress therefore the term walk fits the bill perfectly. As we walk the Christian pathway we are to do so as children of the light. In other words we are to humbly follow the one who is the light of the world the one who has enlightened our lives through transformation from darkness to light.

He is the one who guides us day by day in the light for he is light and radiates our pathway with his light. What is involved in walking as children of the light what ought we to be able to see in our lives. Well Paul gives us three things here (v 9).

But before we deal with them let us deal first with a little textual matter. The King James Version here has "fruit of the Spirit" whereas the NIV and other translations have the 'fruit of the light.' The context along with many of the manuscripts favours the idea of 'fruit of the light.' The idea of the fruit of the Spirit does not seem to fit the context nearly as well. Paul is clearly referring here to the result of having the light within us.

When the light is received it has marked effects upon the receiver it brings forth fruit. Now we need to be clear there can be no fruit unless there is light a tree in darkness cannot bring forth fruit and so a life lived in darkness can never bring forth spiritual fruit. Fruitful lives are lives that are illuminated by the light of the gospel of Christ. So let's look at this fruit that children of the light will bear.

i) **Goodness** – Now once again it is important to notice the words used here. Paul could have said that the fruit of the light is all goodness but he actually says it is "in all goodness." What Paul is saying is that the fruit is not so much to be equated with goodness as that it manifests itself in goodness. This is no surprise for when we are made light in the Lord we possess the Lord Jesus who is good.

Therefore one of the ways that God demonstrates his light is through goodness. We know that God is good and therefore we ought to see God's goodness demonstrated in the life of his people.

ii) **Righteous** - Likewise God is righteous He is the perfect lawgiver and he demonstrated in his Son that he is the perfect law keeper. So righteousness has to do with law keeping and this is where it differs with the word goodness. Its possible to do good acts while still being a law breaker but the Christian is not only to display God's goodness in our world but we are to live righteous lives we are to be law keepers.

iii) **Truth** - The third fruit that Paul mentions here is the fruit of truth. Paul clearly has truth in action in mind here its not just that we speak the truth but we live out our lives truthfully. Once again God is truth and therefore having been made light by God our lives will imitate his and be full of goodness, righteousness and truthfulness. Now how do we measure up how much of this fruit are we demonstrating?

Unless we are showing all of them in our lives then we are not converted for these are the fruit of conversion. It might be that because of our sin and rebellion the fruit is not as clearly seen as it ought to be but if we are children of the light there will be goodness, righteousness and truthfulness. You see the contrast is with darkness and light; the fruit of darkness is the very opposite from what we find in the children of light.

Darkness displays itself in evilness, unrighteousness and lying. That sums up the unbelieving world it full of these things but the true believer is full of goodness righteousness and truthfulness.

b) It is to find out what pleases the Lord (v 10) – Living as children of light involves examining the various teachings that are presented to us and then following the one that is true and pleases the Lord. This is what Paul means here. He is not saying find out what pleases the Lord and then do it but he is saying examine the various teachings presented to you and find out which one is approved by God and then follow it. Just like our day there were many false teachings being presented to the church at Ephesus and so the church had to test each teaching to see if it was God's way.

If they tested a teaching and found it to be true then they were to hold fast to it without wavering or giving way. Paul is saying that as children of the light we are not to be gullible we are to test the various teachings presented to us today and then we are to follow only the truth whatever pleases the Lord. When we were in darkness we did not recognise the truth in fact we called falsehood truth and truth falsehood.

We were blind to God's truth but now we are light so one of the marks of the light is that we believe the right things and we therefore teach the right things. God's light in our hearts reveals the light of the truth of his word to us.

Now of course this means that we must study God's word, listen to good preaching and read good books but everything we read apart from the Bible and everything we hear must be received with a critical eye and ear. We must not believe everything we are told or everything we read everything must be weighed against the infallible word of the living God. Christians today can be so gullible we can be so easily taken in. Why is this? It must be because we do not have a real desire to please the Lord. If we did we would examine the scriptures to see if we are being told the truth. This takes hard work but the hard work will follow if we have a real desire to obey the Lord and please him.

Unfortunately in the church today there is an anything will do mentality, which actually means that we are not, as disciplined in seeking to please the Lord as we should be. In churches where there is no pastor and Eldership all the people can become concerned about is filling the pulpit so that it leaves open the door for those who do not teach what is pleasing the Lord. We must guard against that we must not assume that everything that is said in this place is pleasing to the Lord.

We ought to examine what is said and if it is right then we ought to follow it with our whole hearts for it is pleasing to the Lord.

c) It is to expose sin (vs. 11-14) – When we are light then we are to do two things with the darkness that surrounds us.

Firstly we are to have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness. We are not to be part of living in darkness we are now children of the light so we are to have nothing to do with doing the fruitless deeds of darkness. Notice it is the deeds that are to be shunned not the people who do the deeds. It's a case of loving the sinner but not the sin.

We are not to cut ourselves off from the unbeliever and become a holy sect no we are to go where Jesus went among the sinners of our world but we are to do so without accepting or being part of their sinful actions. We are not to adopt the standards of this world nor are we to follow its ways or fall into its sins we are to deliberately have nothing to do with the deeds that those in the dark do.

But Secondly Paul tells us that we are actually to expose those dark deeds. Does this mean that we are to go to the unbeliever and point out his sins one after another and expose them to him? If

we were to do that we would not have a hearing for very long would we? Well what Paul means is this? We are light and when that light is clearly seen it begins to expose the darkness in people's hearts and lives.

The world begins to see sin for what it is when Christians live as light within our dark world. When our lives are so radically different when we live holy lives then the deeds of darkness are exposed against the light of God's holiness in us. Exposing deeds of darkness will of course involve speaking gently with people showing by our words and conversations what living in the light really means. It will mean explaining what sin is and how offensive it is to God. In other words we expose the fruitless deeds of darkness when we live holy lives and when we speak God's truth to others.

Now both must go together. The truth spoken will have no credibility if our lives do not back up those words. Likewise our holy living will be meaningless until we support those lives with spoken truth. Now this is a great challenge to us all isn't it. Are we exposing the deed of darkness in our places of work or in our communities or in our schools simply by living as children of the light and speaking as children of the light? That is a tremendous challenge for us all.

Now there are some deeds that are so shameful that they are done in secret (v 12). There are deeds of darkness that are done openly without shame it seems but there are some that are so evil that they are done in secret and the people who do them do not wish to do them openly. In fact Paul says that they are so bad that he says it is shameful even to mention what these secret deeds are. If Paul will not mention them by name; neither will I but I suspect we can all think of some of those deeds? But even those sins that are so evil that they are done in secret will be exposed when the light is shone upon them (v 13). Paul's point is that Christians are light and we are to live lives so radically different that when we come into contact with people who are involved in shameful secret sins our lives will begin to expose those deeds of darkness. They will begin to see how sinful their deed is. This is what the gospel does isn't it.

When we came into contact with the gospel we began to see the seriousness of sin. In fact we began to see what sin is. It might well have been that we thought of ourselves as basically good and then we were hit with the gospel and our hearts were exposed and made visible by the light of the gospel. It might have been that we came into contact with a Christian and we begin to see how different her life is to our lives. We begin to feel uncomfortable about our lying or selfishness.

What is happening is that the light is beginning to make visible the secret deeds of darkness. We need to realise just how effective we can be in our society and in our families. But that will only happen if we are living as children of the light. If our lives are truly holy unto the Lord and if our lives support our words as we speak gospel truth to sinners within our world.

We will in a wicked world where sin seems to abound. How will things be turned around? Well ultimately it takes God to do it by his Spirit but his means of doing it is his people. People who live and speak as children of the light. We must pray that God will help us to live holy lives but we must pray that God will begin to expose the dark deeds of sinners so that they will see their sin and come to Jesus who is the light of the world.

Paul finishes this section by quoting a Christian hymn (v 14) that was probably used as a baptismal hymn. Paul is quoting it to remind the believers of their own experience. Light made visible their sin and as a result they were waken from their spiritual sleep and raised from the their spiritually dead state. This happened to them by Christ shining upon them.

That was the experience of the Ephesians therefore says Paul if that is what has happen to you let your light shine forth so that sinners may be awaken and raised and become light in the Lord.

What is true of the Ephesian church is true of you believer therefore walk as children of the light by pleasing the Lord and exposing sin through the holiness of our lives in Christ.

Amen