

This morning our sermon passage is Ephesians 5:6-14.  
This section deals with the themes of darkness and light.

Darkness and light are no small themes in scripture.  
We find these themes in the very first sentences of Scripture.

**Genesis 1:1** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. **2** The earth was without form and void, and **darkness** was over the face of the deep...  
**3** And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good.

In the very first verses of the bible, darkness and light are front and center.  
And why is that?

Well, consider what the image of darkness communicates.  
Darkness has the connotation of nothingness, death and inactivity.  
And as we go along in scripture, darkness is used as a synonym for sin and evil.

But then there's light  
And in Genesis 1:4, we are immediately told that the light was good.

When you have light, you have warmth, life, and growth.  
Light give us the ability to see and work and produce and be the people we were meant to be.

Without light, it's impossible to live  
And so from the very beginning of scripture to the very end, the themes of darkness and light are inescapable.  
Consider this verse from Revelation 22:5 which is the final verse of John's vision:  
**Revelation 22:5** And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

That's how it ends. God wins.  
He vanquishes the darkness and he himself is the light for his people.

And so, with this background knowledge, we pick up our study in Ephesians 5 and learn what it means to walk as children of Light.

So let's read Ephesians 5:6-14:

**Ephesians 5:6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. **7** Therefore do not become partners with them; **8** for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light **9** (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), **10** and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. **11** Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. **12** For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. **13** But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, **14** for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,  
"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

**Say: *This is God's word.***

***The grass withers and the flower fades but the word of our God stands forever.***

We are in the application section of this letter and the driving force- the controlling theme in this section is: a new identity.

Paul's whole premise in Ephesians is our new identity that we have by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It really controls the whole letter.

When we have faith in Christ, we are "in Christ."

We are children of God. We are new creations.

We have all the spiritual blessings that God could give us.

In Christ, our identity is secure.

And so we are not to be motivated to live for Christ out of fear of condemnation or out of a desire to achieve a position with God.

Because our identity is secure, we are to live for Christ because we love him and we appreciate what he has done for us.

How he has rescued us from darkness.

And this brings us to our outline.

You have an outline in your worship order and the first point there is...

## I. A Reminder of Our Rescue (6-8)

Paul begins this section by reminding us of **the certainty of God's judgment**.

In verse 5, Paul listed 3 particular sins that characterize us when we are outside of Christ.

Those sins are Sexual immorality, impurity and covetousness.

He says:

**5** For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

And after listing these sins that characterize those outside of Christ, he goes on to remind us of **the certainty of God's judgment**.

He says:

**Ephesians 5:6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

The wrath of God has got to be our worlds least favorite teaching in the bible.

And there are a at a few reasons for this.

**First**, there is a popular misconception about the wrath of God.

Typically when we think of the wrath or anger of God, we tend to associate it with the wrath or anger of people.

This conjures up the image of a person flying into a rage.

And this is always unsightly.

When a person is in a fit of rage, they are out of control.

They are dominated by this one emotion and it is not a pretty sight.

In most cases, human wrath is selfishly driven and out of control.

But the wrath of God is different because his wrath stems from a settled position of justice.

When he punishes people for sin, he takes no pleasure in it.

1 Timothy 2:4 tells us that **God... desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**.

In Ezekiel 18, the God reveals his heart regarding judgment.

Hear this extended quote from in Ezekiel 18:

**23** Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? **24** ... when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice and does the same abominations that the wicked person does, shall he live? ...

**Ezekiel 18:25** "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?"

**Ezekiel 18:30** "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. **31** Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? **32** For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live."

Ezekiel 18 reveals to us God's heart regarding judgment and condemnation.

God laments in condemning the wicked.

Yet God must punish it because he is holy and righteous.

And so, as we consider the wrath of God, we must have a right understanding of it.  
God does not delight in the destruction of the wicked.  
He laments it.  
And yet, because he is just and holy, he will by no means clear the guilty.

**Summary:** So, one reason people find the doctrine of God's wrath to be an impossible hurdle is because they associate it with human rage and retribution.

Yet another reason people find the wrath of God an impossible hurdle is because most of us, before we come to Christ, don't think that we are really all that bad.  
And because we think we are not all that bad, **we see God's condemnation as a terrible over-reaction on his part.**

I mean sure- there are bad people out there and hell is an appropriate place for some really, really bad people.  
But most people, our culture would say, really aren't all that bad.

And the reason many people think this way is because by nature, we are blind to who we really are regarding our sin.

In a sermon on this passage, Tim Keller tells a story of a Mike Wallace interview with a Jewish Holocaust survivor named Yahiel De-Nur.

In 1961, Adolf Eichmann, who was one of the chief German architects of the Jewish holocaust, was brought to stand trial in Nuremburg.

And at this trial, Yehiel De-Nur was called to testify against him.

And at one point in the testimony, De Nur just breaks down.

He sobs uncontrollably and just collapses on the floor.

And Mike Wallace, the interviewer many years later showed De Nur the video footage of this.

And asked De Nur what happened there when he broke down and collapsed?

What were you thinking? What were you feeling?

Was it Post-Traumatic stress? Was it that you were just filled with rage to see this man?

Yet Mike Wallace was not prepared for Yahiel De Nur's answer.

De Nur Said, Quote: "When I walked in and I saw him, I suddenly realized he was no demon.

He was no superman. He was an ordinary human being exactly like me.

And suddenly I became terrified about myself. I saw that I am capable of the same things."

You see, most of us naturally believe that we aren't really capable of such evil.

Yet one of the lessons of the holocaust is that, if the conditions are right and the opportunity is there, we are really not all that different from some of the most evil men that ever lived.

The bible tells us that the capacity for great evil lies within every one of us.

And this means that the sin you see in your life is really just the tip of the iceberg.

There is so much more capacity for sin in your heart that you don't even see.

And it is because of our sin that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

This is an unpopular doctrine.

It isn't popular today and it wasn't popular in Paul's day either.

That is why in verse 6, some teachers were denying God's judgment.

He tells them: **6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.**

Even in Paul's day, there were teachers who shied away from the doctrine of God's wrath.

And in so Ephesians 5:6, Paul reminds them of the condemnation they have been rescued from.

And in verse 8, he reminds them of the darkness they have been transformed out of.

He says:

**8** for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

God didn't just rescue us of darkness and bring us into light.  
No, he transformed us from darkness to light.

8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

So let me ask you: How do you view yourself?  
Do you view yourself as not really all that bad?  
Do you view your sin as really a minor issue, not really worthy of God's condemnation?

Or have you come to see yourself as you really are without Christ?  
As not just living in darkness or sometime participating in the darkness.  
But rather as someone who, without Christ, is darkness?

***It's only when we recognize our condition as hopeless that we run for Christ.  
He is our only hope. And in him, we become Light in the lord.***

Now, after reminding of what we have been rescued from, Paul goes on to give us reasons for walking as children of the light.

And this brings us to our second point:

## **II. Reasons for Walking as Children of Light (8b-11)**

Beginning at the end of verse 8 and running through verse 11, Paul lists for us 3 reasons why we should walk as children of light.

And the first reason is the most obvious one.

And that is

### **A. Such a life reflects who we truly are (8b)**

You see, the Christian life starts with a new identity.

In the Lord, we are light.

And because this is who we are, we are to walk as children of light.

1 John 1:5 says:

**1 John 1:5** This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

As Christians, God is now our Father and when we walk as children of light, we are simply being like our Father.

And this is why one of the most unsightly things for others to see in us as Christians is our sin.

Sin is so unbecoming of us because it is not who we are, really.

I remember some years ago when I was in German language school in Frankfurt, a group of us from the class went out for lunch at the McDonalds in the center of the city.

And after we had gotten our food and sat down, I remembered one other item that I wanted to order. And so I stood up and got in line.

And as I was in line, a large group of grade school students descended upon the restaurant.

And one after another, they were cutting in line.

And I was caught off guard with how shamelessly the kids cut in line in front of me.

And when I came back to the table, I voiced my frustrations to my other classmates.

One of whom was a Muslim.

And I'll never forget his words to me.

He said: "Philip, You're a Christian. And you're this upset over a few kids cutting in line in front of you."

He was right. Sin is never becoming of a Christian.

We have a perfect savior who is the light and he calls us to be lights for him.

The second reason we are to walk as children of light is because...

### **B. Such a life is truly productive (9, 11)**

Notice in verse 9 that the deed of the light are called fruit.

Paul says:

**9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)**

In almost every instance, Fruit is a positive image in Paul's writings.

It comes from the work of the spirit done in the heart.

Fruit grows organically out of a heart that has been transformed by Christ.

This is why in Galatians 5:22, Paul describes the Christian life in terms of fruit of the spirit.

He says: **22 ... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control**

Fruit is almost always a positive thing in Paul's writings.

Yet when it comes to sin notice that Paul does not use the word "fruit" but rather "works".

In verse 11 he says:

**11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.**

The thing about fruit is that it has the ability to reproduce itself.

Fruit is productive in a way that works can never be.

Works just end when they are completed.

Yet fruit has the ability to multiply and continue reproducing.

Again, in Galatians 5:19, Paul calls sin the works of the flesh.

He says "Now the works of the flesh are evident..." and he goes on to list various sins.

And then he says: "But the fruit of the Spirit..."

Paul's point here is that the works of the flesh produce nothing good and lasting.

They only leave a legacy of death and decay.

Yet when we walk as children of light, the fruit we produce leads to life.

This fruit endures, reproduces and to has an eternal impact.

One characteristic of being created in the image of God is that we hunger for meaning.

We want to matter. We want our life to count.

It's unbearable for us when we feel useless or that our life is going nowhere.

And the bible tells us that if we want our life to really matter, if we really want to be truly productive, then we should follow Christ.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 13:23, that when his word is understood and believed, that person...

**Matthew 13:23** ... bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

When we live for Christ, we bear fruit that lasts and that grows exponentially.

Yet when we live for ourselves, our lives and our works are like grass.

One day they are there and the next day they are gone.

Don't you want your life to matter?

Don't you want to bear fruit that will lasts.

Walk as children of the light.

The final reason that we should walk as children of light is found in verse 10.

And that is,

### **C. Such a life pleases God (10)**

In verse 10, Paul writes:

**10** and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

This gets to the heart of the Christian's best motivation in living for Christ.

As Christians, our best motivation for walking as children of light is that we love God.

We want to please God with our lives.

And the most wonderful thing about being a child of God is that we can please him and that he is quite easy to please.

I read this week in C.S. Lewis an even older quote from the author George MacDonald:

**“God is easy to please but hard to satisfy.”**

Isn't that beautiful.

God is that perfect heavenly Father who does not shade the truth or flatter us with compliments.

But he is easy to please as we live for him.

**He notices** every endeavor to walk in faithfulness.

**He sees** every attempt to swallow our pride and every overture born of sensitivity.

When we make it our aim to please him, he is pleased.

And so in verse 10, we are commanded to

**10 try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.**

This means that we are to meditate and reason it out: what actions would honor God?

What sort of decisions and behavior would please the Lord?

A great prayer to pray is in Psalm 139:23, where David leads us.

He says:

**Psalms 139:23** Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

**24** And see if there be any grievous way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting!

**10 Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.**

So after considering the reasons for walking as children of the light, we now come to ...

### III. The Calling to Expose the Works of Darkness (7-8, 11-14)

In verse 11, Paul writes:

**11** Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

And by exposing them he has parameters in mind.

First, we are to identify the sin we see in our own lives.

We aren't to be unwitting about the wrongness of our actions or attitudes.

Rather we are to examine ourselves and see what displeases the Lord.

Jesus says if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off.

And while he isn't speaking literally, he still does want us to be ruthless with the indwelling sin in our lives.

Yet we are not to stop there.

We are also called to gently reprove other believers when we see them going astray.

In Galatians 6:1, Paul writes:

**Galatians 6:1** Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Generally, among Christians in our day, we are slow to speak to others about their sin.

And perhaps this is because we know that we also have failings.

Yet still, we are to take patterns of sin seriously and our fear of how we will be received should not stop us from gently speaking to others about their sin.

One place where this verse does not apply is to the world.

Confronting people outside of the church with their sin in order to get them to change their behavior should never be our aim.

This is what the Pharisees did and they were wrong for it.

Our message to the world should be the message of the Gospel of Christ which emphasizes repentance and faith in Christ.

Throughout the ages, the church has gotten a bad reputation for calling out the world for its sin.

The problem with unbelievers is not primarily their behavior but rather their lack of repentance and faith.

Our message to the world therefore is not one that pertains to right living but rather faith in Christ.

Yet concerning ourselves and others in the church, confronting sinful behavior is fair game.

We ought to be humble enough to receive others' correction.

We should welcome it.

God has put other believers in your life to help you walk as a child of Light.

So receive correction graciously whenever it comes to you.

It may not always be fair or entirely correct.

But in such correction, there is an opportunity to learn and grow.

So, **11** Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

And walk as children of light.