

February 27, 2005

Lent 3

"Live in the Light of the Son"

EPHESIANS 5:8-14

***F**or you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴ for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

I will begin a sentence and have you complete it for me with one word. First sentence: "Practice what you preach." Second sentence: "He is all talk and no walk." Third sentence: "Actions speak louder than words."

Each statement underscores the need to follow through with what we believe and what our convictions are.

Follow through with your convictions. That is what the last part of Paul's letter to Ephesians is about. Christians who have been blessed by Christ will want to show these blessings to people living around them. They actually enjoy being encouraged to do this.

No one had to tell you to be happy when the sun began to shine again after almost a week of rain. Perhaps you heard people say to one another, "Isn't it nice to see the sunshine." We love the blessing of rain. We also love the blessing of the sun that warms our heart, brings smiles to our faces, and causes our plants to grow. Imagine living every day in the "Son Shine," Not Sun-shine, but Son-shine, the mercy and love of Jesus the Son of God our Savior. This joy of living in the light of the Son (SON) so fills our lives that we begin to reflect this to other people living around us, to those who believe and those who do not believe.

The other night, when the clouds broke, the nearly full moon was shining brightly. The moon reflects the light of the sun. Some nights this reflected light of the sun is so bright you can walk at night with a light in your hand. Why has the Lord left you here on this earth? Our reason for being here is to live as children of the light. This morning we want to speak to you about **"Living in the Light of the Son"** –God's Son, Jesus our Savior.

1) Joyfully walk in that light

There are days the sun does not shine and there are nights the moon does not reflect the light of the sun. There are no days in the life of the Christian when the light of God's love does not shine brightly. "Goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our lives." Paul reminds us of what we once were and what we are now. Notice the striking contrast. "For you were once darkness, but now you are children of light." It does not say, "You once lived in darkness." It says, "You were once darkness." You and I were part of the kingdom

of darkness. We belonged to Satan who is called the Prince of Darkness. We once enjoyed living in that darkness and wanted nothing to do with the light as the gospel of John tells us, "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." Jesus described the eternal death and punishment that was waiting for us after we die as "outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

You were once darkness. Who me? Yes, you. Yes, me. Where would I be this morning if I were still part of that that darkness? Satan would still have his way with me that is for sure. Satan would be delighting to see me worship some false god such as the money that is deposited in the bank from my paycheck. He would be dancing for joy that I am developing hard calluses toward sinful behavior in my life. He would be happy as clam that I am spending every day trying to be a good person to atone for the things I have done wrong, without realizing how impossible it is to do this. Jesus called Satan a murderer because he loves to keep people in his kingdom of darkness and unbelief. Whenever you see darkness creep back into your life, you realize what an awful position was once yours.

Now you are light in the Lord. You not only live in the light, you are part of the light. Have you ever stepped into a totally dark room where you could see nothing except the darkness? What a relief it was to turn on a light, even if it was a small light. Suddenly you could see things that ordinarily you would not be able to see in the darkness. When the Holy Spirit turns on a light in your life, you begin to see things about God that ordinarily would not see, even when you take a walk on the beach on a beautiful sunny day on the Central Coast of California. You see who God is: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, yet one God. You see who Jesus Christ is: Lord and God from all eternity, yet true man born in Bethlehem with our flesh, bones, blood and hair. You see the sacrifice Christ made for your sin and how complete and thorough it was. You hear the words: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses you from all sin." You believe this little word "all" applies to you. In the light of God's Son, you begin to see a far better world waiting for you after you die. John wrote in his gospel, "We have seen the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth."

As we said in earlier, our whole purpose for being left here on this earth is to reflect the light of the SON with the limited amount of time that the Lord gives us in our lives. As the words in our text say, "Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord." The word for "live" literally means to walk around. Where ever you walk in life, whether it is at home, at school, at your job, or doing you shopping, you are a mirror that reflects the light of the Son. The light shows itself in the way we bear fruit for the Lord, fruit such as goodness, righteousness and truth. You don't walk around trying to please God by doing what pleases you. You reflect the light of the Son by doing what pleases God, measuring your life against his standards of what is good, right and true. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, what is admirable-if anything is excellent or praise worthy-think about such things." I may have my own ideas on how to reflect this light, but they need to be measured according to God's standard of what is good, right and true.

I am sure you have heard the expression, "Bloom where you are planted." For the Christian a better statement might be "Bloom where you have been transplanted." Remember your childhood when you did an experiment in school with a potato that you let sprout in a dark

closet. The plant that came out of the darkness was sickly and destined to die. That is how we were born into this world, as Ephesians 2 says, "Without God and without hope" and "dead in trespasses and sin." Then we were transplanted into the light of God's love for us, and we were given new life in the Son shine of all the blessings that were given us in Christ. You were taken from the land of darkness. You were once no body (without God and without hope), but now you have become somebody, somebody special to the Lord. You are somebody telling everybody about one body (one body beaten and nailed to a cross for your sin) that can save anybody. The fruit you bear in your life wherever you walk is powerful testimony to the blessings of living in the light of the Son.

2) Carefully avoid the darkness

Living in the light of the Son involves more than walking around and reflecting Jesus glory. It also involves carefully avoiding the darkness. Our text says, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret." When darkness starts creeping back into your life, what do you do? Do you say to yourself, "I am in the light, I don't have to fear the darkness?" Do you say to yourself, "A little darkness won't make much difference in my life?" Or do you even try to justify and smooth over the times you have slipped back into the darkness and made excuses for them.

The Christian who walks in the light of the Son, always takes a proactive position when it comes to darkness. That proactive position involves avoiding the darkness. In Romans 6 Paul says, "What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" A little darkness is like leaven or yeast. Given the right circumstances it can suddenly grow at a fantastic rate and multiply in our lives. Psalm 1 says, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers."

Here is another statement to complete, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Remember how God's people in the promised land of Canaan opened themselves up to the darkness of the people living in the land. It says, "A new generation grew up that did not know the Lord." Charles Colson writes in his book, *Against the Night* that our job as a church in these last days is not to transform the culture in which we live, but to transcend it or rise above it. That happens when we stay away from the darkness so that it does not suck us into its swirling vortex.

Some things done under the cover of darkness are so shameful that we don't even want to speak about them. A wife called into the Dr. Laura show this past week, pleading for help after she discovered her husband was visiting sites on the internet that displayed awful scenes of men and women doing things contrary to what God has planned for marriage and family. It is shameful even to mention the things done in secret. If you are doing things in secret, then listen this morning to God's word and let it convict you. "Everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible." To fix a problem in your car, the mechanic may hold a light close to the engine and look for problems, or put it on a computer. Let the light of the Son shine in every dark places that exists in your life and let that light expose those sins for what they are, shameful sins of the night and of the darkness. Let the love that Jesus has for you lead you to confess openly and freely, "Cleanse me from my secret faults..." and "Try me and see if there is

any wicked way in me.”

Our text ends with an interesting quote. “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” I don’t know if this was a reference to words from Isaiah 60 about rising and shining, or whether this was a hymn that was sung in the early church, or perhaps even a battle cry for evangelism. All around us people are still in the darkness and they are spiritual dead. We have the privilege of reflecting the light of the Son to them, and we have the privilege of calling them to come out of the darkness into the light. I am going to close with another sentence that I often heard my father say to encourage us to make most of the time we have to get the most work done possible. “Son you need to make hay when the sun shines. We live in the light of the Son! What a week for reflecting his glory. Amen.