

Walk Worthy (pt. 3): Walk in the Light
Ephesians 5:6–14 | 12.03.2017 | More Than We Imagine @OBC

As we think about gift giving during this Christmas season . . . I'm reminded of one of the gifts I got as a child – the Original Nintendo game system.

You know . . . the one they're trying to sell again, so thirty-somethings can relive their childhood.

It's the one that came with Duck Hunt and Super Mario Brothers . . . some of you remember . . . some of you may even remember the secret codes for Mario Brothers.

In that game the Mario Brothers were Italian-American plumbers who battled creatures in various sewer-worlds . . . worlds broken into various levels and connected by secret passageways

And if you knew the right code, you could skip whole levels to go from world 1 to world 4 and so on. Not that it matters . . . But my favorite was always 2-2, where Mario went swimming.

Enough with childhood video games . . . but I bring it up because sometimes. . .

I think we approach the Bible and especially connections in the Bible like Mario Bros. . . . we look for secret passageways btw one book and another, between OT & NT.

But reading the Bible is nothing like plumbing the depths Mario brothers . . .

Rather, the connections between one book and another are always on the surface, and found by careful and repeated readings of the text.

For instance, in Ephesians . . . we find multiple connections with the book of Isaiah.

In Ephesians 2:17 . . . Paul says . . . **And he [Christ] came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.**

Commentators are agreed, Paul is making use of Isaiah 57:19, which reads, **“Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,’ says Yahweh, ‘and I will heal him.”**

Then in **Ephesians 4:30** reads, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit,” . . . an idea that originates in **Isa 63:10**, where the Prophet said of Israel: **“they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit”**

Finally, in Ephesians 6 . . . we'll learn that the armor of God is not original to Paul. Rather the breastplate of righteousness and helmet of salvation come from Isaiah, when God said he would intervene to bring salvation to his people. Isaiah 59:10 reads,

**He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head;
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.**

In all these passages, we see how Paul understood the formation of the church as fulfilling the promises and prophecies to Isaiah . . . **The same is true in our passage today.**

In **Ephesian 5:6–14**, the theme of light is pronounced.

Six times in 9 verses the word LIGHT is used. And the whole section turns on this concept.

In fact, the whole section is moving towards, Paul's climactic words in v. 14 . . . **READ**

He introduces these words as though they are an OT quotation . . . but they are not.

You won't find **Ephesians 5:14** in Isaiah or any other OT book, . . . but it very much summarizes the message of Isaiah . . . that to a world covered in darkness . . . God would bring light.

In fact, every Christmas . . . we remember how Christ's birth brings light into the world.

But it's not just Isaiah 9 – which we read earlier – that makes that promise . . .

It's everywhere in Isaiah

Isaiah 26:19 says,

**Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!
For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.**

In this verse, we find the promise of resurrection in terms of rising and waking, of light shining into the darkness of death. These are the same terms as Ephesians 5.

Likewise, **Isaiah 60:1–2** says,

**Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.**

Again, these words invite the people of God to arise and walk in the light of the Lord. The very thing . . . Paul is urging the church to do in Ephesians 5.

So . . . even if Paul doesn't cite a verse from Isaiah . . . he picks up themes and words from Isaiah to encourage those whom he calls children of light.

It's important for us to see this . . .

Because it leads us to the source of God's light . . . the Son of God who is the light of the world.

The one who is promised in Isaiah 9 . . . and who brought light into the world, when he was born in a Bethlehem stable.

And church . . . this is why we labor the point . . .

Our world is dark . . . and the command to walk in light goes against everything we face . . .

Indeed . . . if you are NOT a Christian . . . darkness is all you know . . . even your light is darkness.

If you are a Christian . . . darkness is not less present . . .

Think about it . . .

Our world is DARK with the evil news of death – missiles being launched in Korea, 300 Muslims being killed by other Muslims in Egypt, 26 church-goers killed by a lone assassin in TX.

Such darkness tempts us to despair . . . and to protect ourselves or pleasure ourselves.

Either way . . . this DARKNESS tries to make us to stop WALKING all together!

At the same time . . .

Our world is DARK with moral decay – as names like Harvey Weinstein, Charlie Rose, and Matt Lauer have peppered the news . . . we are reminded what darkness IS.

It's not just ignorance or lostness . . . it is sinful behavior that uses and abuses others.

It is what **Ephesians 4:17–18** says . . . **READ**

Ultimately, darkness is a condition of the heart.

This darkness is not just outside in the world . . . it's also inside this room . . .

More alarming than the news reports about egregious sin . . . is the fact that every kind of sin—EVERY KIND OF SIN—resides in our hearts.

Paul calls Xians to walk in light . . . because the threat of sin is real.

Indeed, the only thing that keeps seeds of sin from sprouting . . . is the grace of God . . .

Only the light of the gospel can produce goodness, righteousness, and truth in the child of God.

For this reason . . . we must learn

[1] WHAT it means to WALK in the light

[2] HOW we can walk in the light.

So this morning . . . from Ephesians 5:6–14 . . . I want to answer two questions.

WHAT does it mean to walk in the light?

I have four answers to that question, based upon the context of what Paul is saying.

First, to walk in the light means to walk as a Christian.

As you remember, this whole section from Ephesians 4–6 . . . is given to believers . . . to those who have been made alive in Christ.

To those who are not IN CHRIST,

. . . Paul would urge you to go back to Ephesians 2, where he lays out how you can be saved from their sins . . . thru faith in Jesus Christ.

But here . . . he's speaking to God's children.

He's not telling sons of darkness how to walk in the light.

He's not giving life tips for how to live a more upright and fruitful life . . .

Rather, he's calling sons of light to live out the identity they have in Christ.

As Eph 5:8 indicates . . . **for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord**

Notice too . . . he doesn't say Xians are just IN the light . . .

John 1:9 says . . . God's light has shown on all people . . . believer or unbeliever.

No in Ephesians . . . he says children of God ARE LIGHT in the Lord. . .

And thus to walk in the light is to walk in all that it means to be a Christian.

That's the first answer to walking in light . . . the second is similar.

Second, to walk in the light means to walk in the new identity that God has given to us in Christ.

If you remember . . . Ephesians 5:6–14 runs parallel with Ephesians 4:17–24.

In the previous section, Paul speaks to Christians of their new life in Christ . . . and calls them to put off the old and put on the new.

Likewise, here he reminds them . . . they are no longer children of darkness.

They have become partakers of God's light . . . therefore he says . . . walk in light.

Which is to say . . . WALK AS YOU NOW ARE . . . NOT as you used to be.

Church . . . this is MASSIVE. In our day of confused identities . . . we must embrace WHO we are in X.

Not who we are . . . in addition to Christ.

Here's what I mean . . . there are some who are saying . . . various desires, especially sexual desires, are an intrinsic part of who you are.

Therefore . . . Christians take on the identity of "gay" to call themselves Gay Christians, even though they are living celibate or monogamous lifestyle.

I appreciate the sensitivity these believers have for those who feel the pain of following Christ with strong desires that do not match God's design.

But . . . that is true for every Christian. The call to die to self is by definition painful!
. . . Every Christian has desires that left unchecked would make shipwreck of your faith.

For some that may be a temptation towards the same sex . . . for others it may be sexual expression outside of marriage . . . for others it may be any other kind of material lust.

But the point is the same . . . in every case . . . the child of God is called to deny that old identity and to live out his new identity in Christ.

Few are more helpful on this point than [Rosaria Butterfield](#). As she puts it in her book, *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ* (114, 123):

Christians are called 'saints' in the Bible. We who bear Christ's spilled blood are a royal priesthood. Any category of personhood that reduces a saint to the sum total of his or her fallen sexual behavior is not a friend of Christ. . . . **Making an identity out of sin patterns is itself a sin."**

Going back to Ephesians . . . to walk in the light means walking in the new identity we have been given in Christ . . . and it means refusing to identify ourselves with us any practice, desire, or passion that comes from or contributes to the darkness.

So how do we walk in light? By radical commitment to living out our new identity in Christ.

Third, we walk in the light we must walk with one another.

Don't miss this . . . chapter 4 begins with a call for the church to grow up in love together.

Thus . . . everything that follows is set in the context of the body of Christ.

IN FACT . . . I don't think it's too much to say . . .

. . . that without the community you won't be able to finish the race.

That is to say . . . God intended for you to walk in the light with others who are in the light.

Thus . . . every WALK command . . . can be read as WALK TOGETHER

Walk **together** in love . . . Walk **together** in light . . . Walk **together** in wisdom

Walk as the community of saints . . . not like the community of the gentiles.

To get even more specific . . . notice how Paul's instructions are given in Ephesians 5:7 and 5:10.

First, he says . . . **Do not become partners with them** . . .

Who is the THEM? It's the sons of disobedience in v. 6 . . . who are under God's judgment.

Second, he says . . . **Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness**

The word literally reads . . . Have no **koinonia** with the unfruitful works of darkness.

We are to have partnership in Christ . . . with God's children of light.

We are not to have partnership with the darkness.

The trouble for so many . . . is trying to walk with Christ . . . without partnering with his people.

It's like going to the store and buying a [Self-Help Bible](#) – **yes, they exist!**

But it's an absolute joke! Your SELF is what got you into trouble . . . it can't get you out . . .

It's God alone who saves . . . and he keeps his children IN THE LIGHT . . . by placing them in **communities of light**.

So . . . don't read these verses as individualistic instructions to improve your Christianity.

These are family commands . . . calling you to walk with your brothers and sisters of light.

And only with your family of faith . . . can you avoid the partnerships that the darkness offers.

Fourth, we walk in the light by standing against darkness AND spreading forth the light.

This is a two-fold summary of the seven imperatives we find Ephesians 5:6–14.

To walk in the light includes more than just NOT having your name show up in the headlines for gross immorality . . .

Walking in the light . . . means proactively spreading the truth of the gospel and helping others to walk in that way.

IN FACT . . . in our day . . . don't be surprised if walking in the light **puts your name** in the headlines as someone who is a hateful bigot . . . B/C you hold fast to the fruits of light – G/R/T

But again . . . this is why we need one another to stay in the light . . . so that as the darkness threatens . . . we will encourage one another to keep shining for the Lord . . .

And we encourage one another best . . . when we encourage one another with God's word – so notice what Paul says here.

First . . . in verse 6 . . . he gives a simple command with a serious motivation – **READ**

Interestingly, this warning against empty words stands in contrast to the last two commands in verse 14 . . . so that verse 6 and verse 14 make an opening and closing pair of commands.

Thus . . . Paul begins by saying beware of empty lies that might lead you into darkness

And he ends saying . . . Wake up! Get out of bed, you sleeper.
 You have been made alive . . . so go and walk with Christ.
 And as you walk with Christ, his light will shine on you.

What a difference . . . verse 6 and verse 14 . . . and they teach how to keep walking in light.

That's the first set of commands . . . Next in vv 7 and 8 . . . we find two more commands – **READ**

Again . . . the contrast is between partnering with darkness or walking in the light.

And v. 9 comes along to motivate the church to walk in light . . . as it reminds us that just as the sun produces good fruit from good seed . . . so walking in God's light produces good fruit

By contrast . . . the darkness of night produces nothing. . . .

Then Look at **verses 10–11** . . . where we see the last two commands . . . **READ**

Hear Paul again warns of who you partner with . . .

And he calls for exposing the deeds of darkness.

Now . . . we need to expound a little further on what this means?

The command to not pursue deeds of darkness is simple enough.

But what does it mean to EXPOSE these unfruitful works of darkness?

Is this a command to go into the world and call out sin ???

What do we make of the verse, which seems to say the opposite? **READ v. 12**

And what do we do with v. 13 – **But when anything is exposed by light, it becomes visible ??**

The first thing to remember in answering this question is this: Paul is addressing the church as a church.

Later . . . in **Eph 6:10** . . . Paul will give instruction about walking faithfully among unbelievers. But here he continues to speak about relationships within the church . . .

Thus He's not . . . giving the church a mission of being the morals police . . . where we go and dig up, down load, and share every sin . . . known to the world.

No . . . he's calling the community of light to address the darkness we find in our midst!

What does this mean?

It's most helpful to see that the command to EXPOSE is the same word that Jesus uses in **Matt 18**

Matthew 18 . . . is the chapter where Jesus teaches his followers how to deal with sin . . . he says in v. 15: **"If your brother sins . . . go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone."**

The imperative in Matthew 18:15 to TELL is the same word translated EXPOSE in Ephesians 5:11.

It is a word that has the sense of rebuking or standing against, as it is used in 2 Timothy 5:20:

For those [elders] who PERSIST in sin, REBUKE them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear

In these cross references . . . we get a sense of what Paul is saying . . . he's not telling the church to delight in punishing sinners . . . he is telling the church we are to be a community of the light.

BUT when sin manifests itself . . . we should **as Matthew 18 instructs** go to our brother or sister and inquire . . . LIKEWISE, if a member of the church – even an elder – hardens their hearts, we must as 2 Tim 5 says **Rebuke them in the presence of all . . . SO THAT the rest may stand in fear.**

Church . . . this is what it means to be a community of light . . . we must stand against the darkness . . . we must preserve the purity of X . . . and help one another to walk with our Lord.

*Which brings us to the second question: **HOW DO WE WALK IN THE LIGHT***

HOW do we walk in the light?

In many ways . . . we've answered this question already . . . but I want to get more practical . . . because the truth is . . . Satan is coming to deceive you and destroy your walk with the Lord.

If you have never felt his hot breath on your neck . . . Ephesians calls you to wake up.

B/C if you do not wake up . . . and identify his empty words . . . his teeth will gnash your flesh.

If you don't walk with X's community of light . . . the darkness will only become more attractive

To be sure . . . our enemy cannot steal our salvation . . . but he can render us and our church useless . . . if we do not take seriously the command to walk in the light.

So here are four ways we can walk in the light . . . which all radiate from one command -- **ABIDE**

1 Abide in the body of Christ . . . and cultivate relationships in the church.

The call to follow X . . . is a call to community, where our deepest relationships are found HERE

God has called us to walk in a body of believers . . . who are each called to build one another up.

And together . . . we are called to point one another to gospel truth.

Thus, in the church . . . we find a people who are walking w/ X and who will help us walk w/ X

In this way, abiding in Christ is not some lonely activity . . . where we strain to hold on

Rather, just as Aaron and Joshua held up Moses arms . . . we hold up one another.

As you know . . . this week one of our families faced the heart-breaking news that their unborn son died and went to be with his heavenly father.

I have to tell you . . . I have been amazed by the outpouring of love . . . you have given to them.

And I have also been amazed at how . . . in the hours after I sent out the first email, I had at least five families share their desire to care for Coxes, many of whom had experienced similar losses.

That's how our head cares for his body. As we suffer . . . the Lord comforts us . . . so that we can comfort others who suffer.

Friend . . . if you are suffering . . . you don't have to suffer alone. The body of Christ is given to uphold you, pray for you, and strengthen you . . . so you can continue to walk in the light.

The alternative . . . is to turn to other sources of idol comfort . . . but for those who abide in Christ and receive grace through his body . . . goodness, righteousness, and truth are born.

2 Abide in the body of Christ . . . and expose all darkness.

In practice . . . one of the greatest ways we walk in darkness is to push against the darkness.

Practically . . . this may mean that the sins which ensnared you before Christ . . . are the very things you work to overturn today.

For instance, when John Newton the pastor who penned Amazing Grace came to faith . . .

He never forgot the horrible way he traded slaves before he was saved . . .

And thus after his conversion, he had a passion for seeing the slave trade abolished.

In his day . . . he spoke against the horrors of slavery . . .

And he supported his dear friend . . . William Wilberforce, . . . who amazingly was used by God end slavery in England.

This is how you grow in the light . . . you press your light into the darkness and humbly resist patterns of sin . . .

And most personally . . . do not be surprised if God would have you fight the very same darkness that once ensnared you.

3 Abide in the body of Christ . . . and keep yourselves awake through meditation on the gospel.

Ultimately . . . the brightness of our light will depend on the radiance of Christ in us.

If we forget . . . ignore . . . or assume the gospel . . . our light will dampen.

Thankfully . . . we can't extinguish his light . . . but we can hide it or block it.

Therefore . . . keep looking to the Son . . . so that the light of his glory would be your chief grace.

As children of light . . . we have been made alive to the splendors of his gospel.

And thus . . . together we ought to regularly remind one another of the God who delivered us from the kingdom of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his light.

This ultimately is where our light comes from . . . and how it grows.

And it is why we take the Lord's Supper today . . . to be reminded through food and drink of the light we have been given in Christ.

ATST The light of his holiness calls us to examine ourselves as we come to the table.