

Walk as Children of Light

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All right, Ephesians, you've got your place there. Ephesians 5. Look with me, if you would, at verse 8. Ephesians 5:8, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord," now look at this last phrase, "walk as children of light." Walk as children of light. That's my message, "Walk as Children of Light."

Let's pray together.

Father, I ask you to bless us as we study this phrase here and this passage of scripture. I pray that your Holy Spirit would take the truths and the principles here and apply them to our hearts and lives, Lord, as you know we have need. I pray you would open our hearts and our minds that we would be willing to receive your word and be willing to humble ourselves and submit ourselves to your word and your instructions as you deal with us. Lord, I can't, I have nothing of myself, I freely admit to you and the world, Lord, I have nothing of myself of any benefit spiritually or eternally. It has to be you and your word so, Father, I yield my will to you again, I present my body anew this hour, pray with all my heart that you fill me with your Spirit, dear Lord, and you speak through me and change us and mold us into the people you intend for us to be, that you created us to be. If there's any unsaved, Lord, I pray that today would be the day of salvation. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

About four weeks ago, I preached a message on walk by faith, "for we walk by faith, not by sight." I didn't intend at the time for it to go on or be any kind of theme or series, I just felt impressed of the Lord that that would be the message for that day. Then the following week, I felt the Lord impressed upon preaching on walk in love. I was studying Ephesians, my personal devotions, and I saw the phrase "walk in love," and so we preached on that. Then the third week, we had our message last week, we looked at a phrase there, "walk in wisdom" from Colossians. Walk in wisdom. Ephesians here has it down in verse 15 we noted, "See then that ye walk circumspectly." So we've been speaking on and I believe in direction of the Lord, we've been speaking on this matter of the Christian walk and if I had known ahead of time that we were going to preach this little impromptu series, I would have named it "Walk This Way," would have been the name of the series.

So today I want to look at this statement here in verse 8 where God tells us through the Apostle Paul, he tells us that we are to walk as children of light. Walk as children of light. Now walking by faith means that I simply trust God, I trust God and I do what he instructs me to do. Because I trust him, I follow his instructions and I obey his word because I trust him walking by faith. Then we said walking in love simply means, if you remember we pointed out that we are to mimic the Lord Jesus Christ in his love and his compassion that he shows to us. We are to mimic that in our interaction with others, walking in love. And then we said last week, walking circumspectly or walking in wisdom simply means that we very very carefully evaluate what we're doing, our lifestyle, and make sure it is according to the word of God. Walking in wisdom. And now we want to look at this matter of walking as children of light.

Now this word "walk" and I want to mention this again, we've in each of these messages, we've pointed out what God means by using that term "walk, walk in love, walk by faith, walk in wisdom, walk as the children of light." What does he mean by the term "walk"? Well, it's not our physical walking from one place to another. He's talking about, if you remember we pointed out he's talking about our lifestyle, our conduct, our behavior, how we live our lives. The Bible refers to that as our walk. So what he's doing here, what we're getting from this is this: God is instructing believers that their lives or their conduct, their walk, is to be distinct from this world, is to be unique than the world walks or the world conducts themselves, or the behavior or the lifestyle of the world as a child of God, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, my walk, my conduct, my lifestyle, my behavior is to be very distinct from the world.

We had the FBN Sharathon this past week and what a blessing that was. I don't know if anybody got to tune in. Anybody here, Pastor Matt, on the air. I'm telling you, that guy has become a radio star. Oh my word, him and Gerald Mill are, good night, if you've heard those two got wound up and, by the way, God did an amazing thing, they made it farther in the Sharathon than ever before in the history of the radio station over 30 years. They got into, I think, November 17 and so it's an amazing thing and we thank and praise the Lord for it. And it's been a joy and a privilege and a blessing for us to have our radio station as a part of that network for 21 years, it'll be 22 years this June.

Years ago and occasionally we get notes and cards and letters and people I'll be out visiting, folks will say, "Boy, I appreciate that station. I'm listening to that station." A number of years ago we got a card at Christmas time to the church about the radio station. They put a little offering in there towards the radio station, those are my favorite ones that have offerings in them. But they had a little note there that they wrote and they made an interesting statement. She made a few things about the radio and things she appreciates, then she made this statement, listen to this, she says, "When I listen to 88.7 FM FBN, I know I'm listening to a Christian station." Then she said this, "FBN is distinctively Christian."

I love that phrase and I used that all through my ministry and I think what Paul is telling, what God is telling us through his word is that you and I as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, get this, we ought to be distinctively Christian. There ought to be no question

about it. There ought to be no doubt in anyone's mind as to whether we're a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ or not, whether we're a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ or not. How many folks here this morning, you would say you're saved and you know it? Say amen. Now if that being true and I trust it is, that we've been saved, we've trusted Christ as our Savior, that being true, our lives ought to be distinctively Christian. Our walk. To use another Bible term, our conversation, our way of life, our behavior ought to be distinctive from the world and distinctively Christian.

Sometimes I'll tell people, somebody, they'll get in a little fuss or something or they'll have a little issue or a little disagreement, I was on the phone this week helping a preacher who's got a little issue going on and he was going to meet with some men, and it was somewhat emotional and it was a little tense, and what I'll say to people, I told him and what I'll say to people sometimes is this, "Listen, you deal with it but be Christian about it." Do you know what I'm talking about? Be Christian about it. A Christian, a believer, a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't handle disagreements the way the world does. We're Christian about it. We're distinctively Christian about it. We don't deal with issues, we don't conduct ourselves the way the world does.

So I think that's what God is telling us here when he uses this phrase "walk by faith, walk in love, walk in wisdom, walk as the children of light." He is saying we're not living the way the world does. The world does not operate by faith in God. This old world, sinful world, unbelieving world, they operate by faith in, who? In man, our own understanding, our own reasoning. Now God has given to mankind, he's designed us that mankind can be pretty incredibly intelligent, right? I mean, we're sending robots on Mars. I tried that one year, I couldn't even get it to go anywhere, you know? We can send robots to Mars. Some people are pretty smart. Anybody ever notice that? Some people are smart and y'all with me this morning? Everybody okay? You see, sometimes my jokes, I think they're funnier than you do and then you don't respond the way I would respond and it throws me.

But here's the problem with the world: the world leans on its own understanding. And look at the interaction between mankind and we've got a mess on our hands. So the world, what I'm trying to say is this: you and I as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, we're to walk by faith, trust God, we believe God, follow his instruction. The world leans on their own understanding and does it their way. We're to walk in love. The world doesn't walk in love. Man alive, this is the angriest I've ever seen this world in my lifetime. Everybody is mad. Everybody is on edge. Everybody flies off at the slightest little thing. Good night, we're burning our cities down, blood running in the streets. They say, "Oh, the police mistreated this guy so I'm gonna burn my neighbor's business down and maybe they'll die in the flames." I'm telling you, that's not love, that's just downright hatred. That's just hatred. God says as a disciple of Christ, as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a believer, as a Christian we're to be distinct from that. We're to walk in love, compassion, mimic how the Lord Jesus Christ interacted and treated others.

Then the world walks in wisdom. Again, the world doesn't walk in wisdom, the world has tremendous amount of intelligence but there's not much wisdom, and the wisdom the world has, those have is worldly wisdom, how to get by, how to accomplish my goals,

how to fulfill my agenda. The Lord says as a disciple of Jesus Christ, as a believer, you and I are to walk in the wisdom that's from above, James says, that is first peaceable and kind and gracious.

So the Christian life is to be distinct from the way the world lives, the way the world conducts themselves. As a child of God, a Christian approaches and deals with people and issues and situations as God instructs us to deal with it, not as the world does, not what comes naturally. I know me a little bit and I know often what comes naturally for me is not necessarily what God instructs me to do. Anybody know what I'm talking about? Y'all are looking so pious at me. Come on now, anybody here have to... How about this, anybody here ever have to bite your tongue? Yeah, because you know what comes, the natural reaction isn't really what the Lord would want me to have. Amen? I'm going to press this until you start agreeing with me, I'm telling you. This old sinful man, this old natural man and God says as a disciple, as a believer, I'm to be distinct. I'm not to interact and behave and conduct myself in that which comes naturally, that's a mess, I need to do it as God instructs me and as the Holy Spirit enables me to. We're to be distinctively Christian in our walk, in our behavior, in our lifestyle.

Now I got working as the Lord impressed upon my heart, this walk as children of light, I got looking at that word "walk" again which, as we said, is our behavior, our conduct, our lifestyle, how we live our lives, but there's another aspect to that. As I got looking at how its used and the words it comes from, it has this idea of a continual, ongoing, long-term endeavor. In other words, when he says walk in love, he doesn't mean like just go out for a little stroll around the block and then come back and then go back to your old self. He means a lifetime of conducting myself in love, a lifetime of having faith in God. It's a long-term thing. Some of you chefs and cooks, you'll appreciate this and maybe you'll understand what I'm saying. The Christian life is a crock pot, not a microwave. Anybody know what I'm saying? I bounced that off my wife and she caught it right like that. I mean, she knew exactly what I was talking about.

The Christian life is long-term. I mean, we're just in this crock pot of life until the Lord calls us to heaven and we're to walk in love, we're to walk in faith, and we're to walk in wisdom, and we're to walk as children of light not just for a little around the block or on a Sunday morning or during a revival meeting, but Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, all week long, every week of every month of every year throughout our life.

So walk as children of light. Walk as children of light. God intends for the Christian life to be a continual consistent walk in the lifestyle that God has designed us to live. Now let's consider this phrase "walk as children of light." Two points to my message this morning so it is going to be exciting. Two points. I know what some of you are thinking, "We'll be out of here in 15 minutes. Only two points." Don't put your shoes on yet, ladies.

1. Walking as children of light, number 1, begins with a conversion. Begins with a conversion and notice verse 8 with me. I'll tell you where I get that. "For," now the previous verses Pastor Matt read a few moments ago, he says it talks about

whoremongers and unclean persons and covetous people, unsaved. He says let no man deceive you with these words, this brings the wrath of God, walking those ways, living in that lifestyle. Then verse 7, "Be not ye therefore partakers with them." Be distinct. Then he says, "For ye," look at these next two words, "were sometimes darkness." Paul's making a very clear contrast between the believer's past and what the believer is now. In other words, a few moments ago I asked how many folks are saved and you know it, say amen. And a great host said amen. That being true, then Paul, what he's doing here, God actually through Paul is doing here is contrasting what you and I as a saved person, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, what we were before, darkness, and what we are now, light.

"For ye were sometimes." That phrase is a key phrase, "ye were sometimes." Now let's break it down. The word "were," question, we're in English class now, question, the word "were" past, present or future? Past. This is something that was true of you and I as a believer. This is something that used to be true of us. "Ye were," you're not anymore but you were, past tense.

Then that word "sometimes" and sometimes the word "sometimes" will throw us. What does he mean by "ye were sometimes"? The word "sometimes" there has this idea: at one point of time in the past, at some point in the past, you were at a point in the past, formerly, you could say. Ye were sometimes, you were at a point in the past, a certain period of time in the past, you were something that is no longer true about you now. So he's contrasting what we were, our past, through what we are, our present.

So I come to this conclusion. I'm looking at it and it says, "ye were sometimes darkness, but now you are light." So he's saying, "All right, you used to be this but now you're this. You used to be that but you're no longer that, that's past tense, and now you're this." That tells me something. That tells me that something happened to bring about that change. Everybody with me? Something took place. There was some conversion of some sort that transformed this person that was darkness and now they're light. Something happened. There was a conversion from darkness to light. The fact of the matter is, if you and I are going to walk as children of light, there has to be some sort of conversion from when there was darkness. Everybody follow me? When a person trusts Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, there's a change that takes place. There is a conversion. There is a fundamental transformation from what I was to what I am now. And it's not simply an outward conformity to some religious rituals, but it is a fundamental transformation of what I am.

Now look there very carefully at verse 8. Notice he doesn't say "For ye were in darkness." He doesn't say that. He says you were, what? You were darkness. Do you see it there? "For ye were sometimes." He doesn't say you were sometimes in darkness, he said that's what you were. Now we'll look at that here in a moment. But now "ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light." He doesn't say you were in the darkness and now you're in the light. That would just be a removal from one place to another. I was in the darkness, now I'm in the light. No. It's a fundamental change of what you are. You were darkness, now you're light. Do you see the difference, the distinction there?

When a person trusts Jesus Christ as Savior, it is not just simply taking on a religion. We had a fellow, we had a lady years ago, I mean this was early on in our ministry here, it would have been the mid '90s or a little before, and I had a lady call the church and say, "Could you come visit?" And I went and visited her and her husband and she had cancer, she was dying of cancer and she was very concerned that she was prepared to meet God, that she was prepared to go out in eternity that she wouldn't go to hell but she'd have a home in heaven. And we went through the scriptures with her and she was very earnest and after some visits and after much explanation and prayer, she bowed her head and trusted Jesus Christ as her Savior and I believe she was genuinely born again. She was happy. There was peace settled in her heart that God had forgiven her sin and given her eternal life. She had assurance of that and she was well enough at that time, she was well enough to follow the Lord in baptism. I said you really should. Studying the scriptures, I'm convinced baptism is the most important thing for a new believer to do after they get saved, follow the Lord in baptism. So we talked about that and she goes, "That's what I want to do. I want to be baptized. I want to come out and out for Christ. I'm a believer. He saved me. I want the world to know and follow him in baptism."

So we made the arrangements, she came Sunday, and her husband came with her. Now I'd only met him a time or two and he was Native American. Big, old guy. And I witnessed to him and talked to him and he said, he goes, "No, I believe the religion of my fathers, my people," which was spiritism, you know, many gods and all that. And nicest guy in the world. I would never want to say anything critical of him. He was respectful, the nicest man in the world but his faith was mistaken.

So his wife got saved, she got baptized, was coming out to church, and one day after service we sat down here and talked, I think we sat over here, and he says, "I'm ready to accept Jesus as my Savior." I said, "That's a wonderful thing." And we talked a little bit and something in what he said just wasn't clicking right and I questioned him a little bit about, you know, and he goes, "Well, I do not want to give up the gods of my people but I want to add to that the Lord Jesus Christ." And I said, "I'm sorry but that's not salvation. That's not salvation adding to, you need to forsake, those are false gods, that is a false doctrine, that is a false teaching, that needs to be put aside and it's Jesus and Jesus alone that saves us." And you know, I couldn't talk that old boy, I couldn't talk him into turning from those false gods and trust the only, the living and true God. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me." Others need to be turned away. And he was very gracious, he moved away, and I haven't seen him in many decades, haven't seen him for a long time.

So what Paul is saying here, what God is telling us here, this conversion, you were darkness and now you're light. It's not you were in darkness and now you're in light. No, no, it's more than that, it is a fundamental transformation. When I trust Christ and Christ alone, not just an outward adding to my religion and not just an outward conformity to some sort of religious lifestyle, the change in my very nature. Darkness and now I'm light, there's a conversion takes place. When a person trusts Jesus Christ as their personal

Savior, there's a fundamental transformation from what they were to now what God makes them to be.

I was saved, as you know, most of you are aware I was saved May 7, 1979 out of a horrendous life. I was telling my wife, we were talking last night, I said my dad which, by the way, it'll be a year tomorrow, Stewart, when we have Paul's funeral, a year ago dad went to be in heaven with the Lord, and my dad never got over the transformation that God performed in his firstborn son's life. Dad never got over that. He was dumbfounded by the change that took place when I trusted Christ. What I was before and what I was after, dad never got over that.

I was saved, as I said, in May of 1979. That fall we would always go up to north central Pennsylvania, counties up there, I forget the county. It was Jersey Shore was a town. We'd hunt. We'd take a week and we'd go deer hunting, dad always did that since I was old enough to hunt. And so I got saved in May, that November, I guess it was, December we went up there and the one fellow, it was all men except for the one fellow's wife, she was the cook, she cooked for us while we...she worked while we played. I was up there just a day or two and she went to my dad, my dad told me later, she came to my dad and said, he said she whispered, she pulled him aside and said, "What in the world got into Denny?" That was me, I was Denny. She goes, "What happened to him? What in the world?" Dad said, "He got saved. God saved him."

That's what Paul's talking about here. He says when a person trusts Jesus Christ as Savior, there's a transformation that takes place, there's a conversion from darkness to light. It's not, listen, it's not just joining a church, it's not just tacking Jesus onto, it's not just tacking Christian onto my name or identifying myself as a Christian. There's a change from darkness to light. The difference between what a believer was before they were saved and what they were after they were saved is the difference there is between darkness and light. I would imagine if you walked into a room and it's pitch black, you would notice that. You walk into a room and all the lights are on, you notice it, right? There's a distinction between the two. What a believer was before they were saved and after they were saved is the same difference there is between death and life.

Come over to chapter 2 of Ephesians. Look at the terminology that the Bible uses here describing what a person was before they were saved to what they were after they were saved. Ephesians 2, look at verse 1, "And you hath he quickened," that word "quickened" means "made alive, you hath he quickened," made alive, "who," what's the next word, "were," past tense, same thing as 5:8, "ye were dead in trespasses and sins." Now you're alive. You were dead.

Look he goes on, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath," under the wrath of God, "even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins," were

dead in sins, "hath quickened us," made alive, "together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Then verse 8 and 9, the classic, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." He's saying the difference in a believer from before they trusted Christ to after they trusted Christ is the difference between darkness and light, between death and life. A fundamental transformation takes place.

Jesus constantly highlighted this. We don't have time. Boy, praise the Lord I don't have five points, amen? Jesus constantly through the gospels emphasized that he is the light of the world as opposed to the darkness of this world, spiritual darkness. In John 8:12, in John 9:5, John 12:46, light and dark. Let's go to one of these, would you real quickly? John 12 is the one I think I want to go to. Come back there very quickly with me. No, I'm sorry, John 8:12, would you turn there real quickly with me? Now there are numerous other places where Jesus referenced this same idea of contrasting the darkness of this world, the darkness of the unbeliever, the darkness of the unsaved, and the light of Christ, and the light of his believers. Look at chapter 8 and verse 12, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the," what? "The light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And over and over and over, and then you get into the epistles and the rest of the New Testament, get out of the gospels and you find the same thought. Before, darkness, death. Trust Christ, light, life.

So there's a conversion takes place here. Conversion, the difference from being separated from God, without God, without hope, to being indwelt by God, by the Holy Spirit. So there's a conversion that takes place. Conversion takes place. So let me ask you this question: have you experienced the conversion of salvation? Have you come to the point in your life you recognize, "I am darkness. I am a sinner." By the way, the darkness here is not just intellectual darkness. I mean, it's more than just ignorance. It's sin. It's spiritual darkness. Do you know what darkness is? Anybody know what darkness is made up of? What is the material that makes up darkness? There is none. There's nothing that...darkness does not consist of anything. Darkness is the absence of light. It is a vacuum. And he says you were darkness, you were a spiritual vacuum, you had no spiritual life, you had no presence of God in your life.

That's why we look out in this world and we see a world desperately trying to fill a vacuum in their heart and soul that nothing in this world can fill except the light of the world which is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a peace and contentment, there is a fulfillment, there is a settled rest for the one that knows Jesus Christ as Savior and has the light that is light now with Christ, the light of the world, and now I am that light in Christ. So my question, I come back to my question: has there been a time when you've come and you've trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and that vacuum, that darkness that you once were has now become light?

I don't know how to verbalize this. I don't know, and some of you all will know a little bit what I'm talking about, I think. But before I got saved, I'm telling you, my heart and soul

was darkness. It was just spiritually dark. I remember clearly and not everybody's experience is the same, everybody gets saved the same but the experience isn't always the same for everybody. And I remember in my room as just a messed up 19 year old kid and I'd be reading my Bible and it was like darkness all around me, the darkness of hell. By the way, the Bible says that hell is a place of outer darkness. The absence of God. The absence of God's presence. That was my life and that's true whether we're aware of it or not fully of any unbeliever. Have you come to the point in your life where you realize Jesus is the light, he is the fulfillment of everything I need, he is the Savior for my sin, and I humble myself before him and I acknowledge and confess and turn to him from my sin, trusting him, and the Spirit of God indwells me and now there's light, there's peace and assurance.

So there's a conversion has taken place here. Come back to Ephesians. Something has happened to these dear folks that they were darkness, now they're light. There's a conversion, something happened to them that transferred them. 2 Corinthians 5:17, a lot of us are familiar with that verse, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." And it's interesting he says he's a new creature, he's fundamentally different than what he was before. Not just an outward conformity but a fundamental change. "I'm a new creature."

Somebody said one time, I worked at the meat packing plant and one of the guys said to me, came up to me, his name slipped my mind now. He had real long stringy hair and a nice guy but he was, some of you old folks will know, he was a Dead-head. Anybody know what I'm talking about? See me afterward and I'll explain it. But he was a Dead-head and he came up and he said, "Hey, man, Leatherman, you scare me, man." And I said, "What's up?" And he said, "I don't understand what happened to you. Man, it freaks me out." A new creature. A new creature.

So there's a conversion has taken place. Salvation is so much more than just a ticket to heaven. It's a transformation of what I am, not the man I used to be. I'm not what I was. God made me a new man. In fact, that's a term the Bible uses, a new man, the new man, the new man. I think a lot of you know what I'm talking about but my question is this: have you come to Christ trusting him and God take you from darkness to light?

2. If I'm going to walk as children of light. 1. There has to be a conversion, I need to be converted from darkness to light, from sinner to saint, from lost to saved. There has to be a conversion and only Christ can do that. By the way, our church cannot convert you. That baptistery, I'd love to baptize every single service if we could. I would love to but I'm telling you, nobody ever was saved or they're so converted through the baptism waters. It's Christ and Christ alone that can and will save us.

2. To walk as children of light means, it means it's going to be displayed in my conduct. First of all, there's a conversion from darkness to light. Then there's a display of that conversion. It becomes seen in my life. It becomes evident. Notice here real quickly he explains in verse 9, I believe, what he means in verse 8. Verse 8 he ends with, "walk as children of light." Now look at the end of the sentence there, the end of that verse, it's not

the end of a sentence. There's a colon there, "walk as children of light." What do you mean by that? Verse 9, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth," then he goes verse 10, "Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." I think what God is doing here, what God is telling us through the pen of the Apostle Paul is saying, "Listen, walk as children of light. This is what I mean by that, is the fruit of the Spirit being manifested in your life?" And he mentions three of them, mentions three of the fruits of the Spirit.

Come with me, if you would, very quickly come over to Galatians 5. Now he just mentions three. Now we're in Ephesians, just go back towards the front of your Bible just one book and you get to Galatians. Now in Ephesians he only mentions three of the fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians 5, he gives us a full list of the fruit that the Holy Spirit bears in our lives. I hope you are hanging in here with me on this and look at verse 22. "But the fruit of the Spirit," there's that phrase again, now here's the list, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." And he says this is a person that's walking as the children of light, this fruit will be displayed. Now he gives the full list there in Galatians, in Ephesians he only mentions three of them for whatever reason.

So this is how the fact that I'm a child of God and walking in this light that God has converted me to when I trusted Christ, transformed me to, and this is how I conduct myself. The fruit is that which the Holy Spirit produces in my life. Now real quick and then we're going to end. 1. He mentions goodness, "walk as children of light: For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." The word "goodness" there means "to be morally upright in my heart and my life; to be kind." Did you ever meet somebody and walk away and say, "Boy, that's a good person right there"? Do you know what I'm talking about? They were kind. They were gracious. To be morally upright, kind, to be a benefit to others, to possess virtue, moral excellence.

So I was darkness, I've come to Christ by grace, I've trusted the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and God saved me and now I'm light and he says walk as a child of light, live your life, conduct yourself, your behavior as what you really are, and that means goodness, living a life characterized by kindness, a life characterized by goodness and selflessness. Here's the problem, sometimes Christians get a little twisted in their thinking and we think, "Boy, I'm a child of God. God's changed me." And here's the danger: we get self-righteous. Right or wrong? And we get this in our head, "Well, I'm better than others. I'm holier than thou." By the way, Isaiah says God hates that attitude "holier than thou." And we start thinking, "Well, they're darkness and I'm light." He goes, "No, no, no, that's not how you conduct yourself, that's not how you walk. You walk in goodness, kind, compassionate, selflessness, exact opposite of what darkness is."

I believe the folks in our community, they meet a Christian, a member of Mountain Lake Independent Baptist Church or a Christian of any stripe, one of the characteristics they ought to notice right off the bat, goodness. There's a good, kind, helpful person. They do right. Not self-righteous but just morally right. They do what's right. I tell you, you get Christians running around like the world and carrying on, self-righteous and involved in

sin and we're not walking in the light, we're not walking in the light. We're to walk as children of the light, not children of darkness and that means goodness.

2. He says righteousness, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness." The word "righteousness" simply, its simplified meaning is this, "that which is acceptable to God; that which is approved of God." In other words, I live my life, I conduct myself, I behave myself, first of all, with goodness, selfless, kind, gracious, but also doing right, what God says is right, what God has approved regardless of what this world says is right. What God says is right. And I'm telling you, we're in a society now where those two versions of right are becoming farther and farther apart, and as a child of God, as somebody walking in the light, it doesn't matter to me what this old world says is right and wrong, it's what God says is right and wrong, and I'm going to do right, what God says is right with a gracious, kind, selfless, humble spirit. But I'm going to do what God says is right. I'm saying this more and more all the time: this world has perfected the ability to take that which is right and make it seem so wrong, and take that which is wrong and make it seem so right. And you and I as children of God, as being converted from darkness to light, we walk as children of the light, we do what God says is right, we hold to what God approves, not what the world says. You say, "Preacher, if we live that way, if we do that, we're gonna take heat from the world." Welcome to Christianity. It's been that way from day 1, taking heat from the world.

So goodness, righteousness, it means to act with purity and integrity, it means the ability to recognize the difference between that which is right and that which is wrong and do what is right. There was a preacher holding a big citywide meeting years ago, I think it was Chicago or somewhere, Atlanta maybe, it might have been LA, I don't know what city it was. But he preached in the evening he preached the gospel, the next day he was supposed to have a lunch meeting with somebody and he got on the bus, the public transportation there, he got on the bus and he went out and bought his ticket, the bus driver, he gave the money and he got his bus ticket and he went and sat down and he looked at it and the bus driver gave him about \$5-10 more in change than he was supposed to have. I mean, it was a bunch. And he sat there and thought for a minute and he thought, "Well, yeah, that would kind of come in handy at lunch. I could use a couple extra bucks." And never, I mean, that just went through his mind and he got up and he came back up to the bus driver and he said, "Sir, you accidentally gave me too much money. Here, I need to give this back to you." And the bus driver grinned and he said, "It wasn't an accident." He said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I heard you preach last night and, boy, you preached a righteous God and you preached against sin, and you preached on doing right." He said, "I wanted to see if you lived what you preached." He said, "I deliberately gave you too much to see what you would do." He passed the test. I wonder if you and I would pass the test?

Goodness, righteousness, and then he has a third one there, truth. Truth, "the fruit of the Spirit is all goodness, righteousness and truth." Truth means simply to be honest or sincere or for real. The reality of our faith in Christ should be just as evident in how we live our lives as what comes off our lips. You listen to some people talk and you're convinced they are the greatest Christian since the Apostle Paul. "Good night, this person

is a Christian. Wow!" And then you see how they live their life and you say, "Good night, this person is a hypocrite. Wow!" To walk as children of light means I don't walk hypocritically. How I talk and how I live match up. Let's bring it home. What I am on Monday morning, what I am on Sunday morning, I am on Monday morning, Tuesday afternoon, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday night. Just as praising, just as rejoicing. To walk as children of light means I don't walk hypocritically, I'm true, I'm for real, genuine.

Walk as children of light in a world that is dark. My wife and I took our honeymoon a long time ago, we went to Luray Caverns. Wow, what a honeymoon place that is. We got a cabin there in the mountains and I'm telling you, it was great. And we went to the Luray Caverns and we're going down through there and now my wife's from West Virginia and they don't have a lot of stuff back there, and so we had...be careful. I didn't know she was going to be sitting right there. And we had a camera, remember this? And she was going to take a picture down in the cave and she held the camera up and it was the old one that had the bulbs on there, remember those, a little thing would flip around? And she mashed that thing and it went right in her face. She had the camera backwards and she was looking so we got a beautiful picture of her nose.

But we got way down there in one of those caves, one of those big rooms, and the guide said this, there were about 25-30 of us and the guide said this, "We're going to show you what it's like to be in absolute darkness, total absence of light." And they turned everything off. I mean, we're way down in the ground and I'll tell you, the total absence of light, that was dark. I literally put my hand up in here and I couldn't see a thing. Nothing. And then she did something interesting, the guide, got a little tiny match out, just a little flame like that, a little paper match and held it up. Whoa, that little light lit up that whole cave. I learned something: you don't have to be a big match, you don't have to be a flamethrower, I can just be a little match that does right, that walks as a child of light, and you could have a profound impact on this old dark world. You don't have to be the biggest or best of anything, you've just got to be for real. You've just got to be kind. You've just got to do right. I'm telling you, we can impact this world in ways politicians never dream of.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, I ask you to help us to walk as children of light. Help us, Lord, to know that there's been a transformation, there's been a salvation, we know we're saved and, Lord, that change you bring about within our very nature, help us to live that out on a daily basis with goodness and righteousness and truth that we can have an impact on this world.

Our heads bowed, eyes are closed, how many say, "Preacher, I know I'm saved, there's no doubt about it, but my Christian lifestyle needs attention. My daily behavior, my conduct as a believer, I really need to give some attention to that and get that the way it ought to be." Is there any like that, "Preacher, God's Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and I want to be that light with the goodness and righteous and truth that the Holy Spirit bears

in my life." Hands all around. How about it, any others? God bless you. Many many hands. I wonder if there's some that say, "Preacher, I know some folks need to be saved. Oh, I want them to be saved. They need Christ." Any like that? "Oh, preacher, family, friend, somebody, they need to be saved." God can use you and I. Just a little match if we'll do right, live right, trust him, witness. God can use us to bring them to Christ. Is there any here who say, "Preacher, I'm not saved. I don't know for sure my sins are forgiven. I need that settled. I need this conversion the Bible talks about." Anybody at all like that, anybody? "I need Christ to save me."

Father, bless our invitation now, I ask, stir our hearts, help us in Jesus' name.