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**Keep the Light on
Ephesians 5:8-17**

Far off in the dark night, the ships captain spotted faint light. Right away he ordered his signalman to send this message. "Alter your course 10 degrees south." Promptly a return message was received 'Alter your course 120 degrees north. The captain was angered that his command had been ignored so he sent a second message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south - I am the captain" Soon another message was received. "Alter your course 10 degrees north - I am seaman third class Jones." Immediately the captain sent a third message, knowing the fear it would evoke: "Alter your course 10 degrees south, I am a battleship!" Then the reply came, "Alter your course 10 degrees north - I am a lighthouse." (Swindall p.145)

Obviously, the captain made a prompt change in the direction his battleship was heading. He changed his direction because his perspective had been changed. He saw what looked like a light heading toward him as a danger, but it was actually a light warning him of the danger he was heading toward. That light that looked like a threat was actually a message of salvation warning, "Rocks, ahead don't come this way, head toward the safe harbor!" The light of God's truth and message is a lot like that lighthouse. At first we may get angered at it telling us what we can or cannot do, but as the Holy Spirit moves in our hearts we begin to stop fighting against the light and begin to see the Light is our salvation.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians the 5th chapter. Paul is writing to the Ephesian believers to remind them of who they are in Christ. He tells them in v.1 to imitate God in the way he loves people sacrificially. Imitate God in the way he forgives people. Share that light of truth to others that you have been clearly shown. Paul continues

in v.3 to warn that there are a whole lot of fake imitations of real love driven by greed and idolatry that are simply immoral and filthy and evil. They are all open cookie jars that look very tempting that they will bring great pleasure and satisfy, but they are empty and worthless and even destructive. Paul is warning us to avoid that garbage because they never satisfy. Those are all part of the old life. That is not the real you anymore so stop living like that. God's children will reflect family characteristics. Those who walk in the light will reflect that same light. Read with me Ephesians 5:8-17 (READ) Light. It's interesting that Jesus uses light to describe Himself. John 8:12 "I am the light of the world, he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life." I John 1:5 "...God is light and in Him there is not darkness at all." God is light and now we are call in v.8 that we believers are light in the Lord. Other places in scripture it tells us that we are to reflect the light of God's truth in our actions and attitudes, but here it is speaking not just of a changed environment. We are NOW light. We who are believers have been changed and are being changed completely. We are not what we will be but when He appears we will be like Him. We once looked at the light in anger and saw it as a challenge to keep us from doing what we wanted to do in our own way. But now in Christ we see the light in a whole new way and even become that light in the Lord. For its possible for light to turn the very thing it shines upon into light. Think about the moon as a Chritian and the sun as Christ. We may look at the moon at night and say, "Boy look at how bright the moon is tonight. It sure is shining brightly ." But what is the moon really doing? The moon is reflecting the light of the sun. We as Christians are to reflect the light of the S-O-N and that light draws others to the true light as we imitate the true love from God. Forgive others as God has forgiven us. Love others sacrificially as God in Christ has sacrificially loved us. Be lights as the light of the world shined down on us.

Its interesting that God chose light to single out for special treatment and gave it properties no other thing in the universe has been given. God equated himself with light and told us we too were light in the Lord and to walk in it. Light is composed of very small energy packets called photons. God decided to use these energy packets to bring humans an energy source needed in order to live food and warmth. God place a large slow burning nuclear fusing sphere we call the sun. Great answer to our problem, but it was 93 million miles away. How is God going to get that energy to his precious planet earth without destroying us with too much? The earth intercepts only 1 billionth of Little light energy packets called photons but that turns out to be preciously the exact amount needed to provide for us (Swenson p.176)

We learn from our physicists that light establishes the speed limit for the entire universe. The speed of light travels the famous 186,000 miles every second. Nothing can go faster for as mass approaches the speed of light its mass increases to infinity. Interesting that Einstein proved that time slows as speed increases and at the speed of light, time stops. For some that might be attractive to us to be traveling at the speed of light and never age, but the problem you may have a very youthful appearance, but be very heavy as your mass would zoom to infinity. A the speed of light, time ceases and all the events become compressed into the present, an unending now. Light is not bound by time as we know it. I don't pretend to understand how past, present and future could all exist simultaneously with yesterday and today, but it has been proven by experiment at hundreds of universities that at the speed of light time actually does not pass. Indeed that comes in parallel with the truth in our Bible that claims God exists outside of time, knows no beginning or ending. He is the great I Am, the one who was, who is and who is to come.

Light stands outside of time. It never ages. It allows us to see. Light awakens us in the morning when the sun rises. It gives energy for plants to flourish and grow. People who are sick heal faster in light. It brings comfort by its presence and depresses us when its gone. It consumes darkness but is never consumed by darkness. It's the first thing that God created after the heavens and the earth. Light is persistent and will penetrate even the smallest of openings.

The hymn we sang says "Immortal, invisible God only wise in light inaccessible hid from our eyes. most blessed most glorious the Ancient of days, Almighty victorious, thy great name we praise." In Revelation it says there will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or light of the sun for the Lord God will give them light. God will be a light so brilliant that it would blind us with fear had it not first swallowed us with love. (Swenson p.179) Amazing God would call himself light and call us to walk in that same light.

The fireworks that shoot up and shine so brilliantly are most beautiful in the darkest night. We have glow in the dark stars on the ceiling of the boys bedroom. They don't shine in the dark unless they have first been kept in the light. If we are going to shine in the darkest of the night must keep ourselves walking in the light. In order to walk it takes two steps repeated over and over and over. One foot out first. Putting off the old sinful life. Putting the other foot out next. Putting on the renewed spirit of your mind, new actions, new attitudes, new behaviors, new priorities that are in keeping with who we are as children of the light. Putting off and putting on is what Ephesians has been teaching us and this section is a great summary reminder of those two steps repeated over and over again. Putting off the old sinful life and putting on our new life in Christ.

Beloved children of God walk in the light. That is what we are to be. Not just walking in a place that is well-lit, but actually being that light. Its not just a change in our environment, change in place, or

people, it's a change in us. Now you are light in the Lord. So what do children of the light do? What does it look like to walk in light? Look at verse 9. "The fruit of the light is goodness, righteousness and truth." To walk in the light is to walk in goodness. To walk in goodness is to put our love into action. I saw that this week when Anna was out working in our flower beds. Doesn't it look well cared for out there? While she was there I noticed another lady come by and make comments of how nice things looked and I knew she had a very busy week, but asked if she could get Anna something to drink. The lady came back a few moments later with a very special something to drink. Love in action. Small perhaps, but it communicated volumes. Goodness is excellence, generosity. Goodness is doing what is fitting pleasing, genuine. Its good. Jesus went about doing good and anticipating where he could do good for others. Goodness is love in action. How do you think God wants you to walk in the light this next week by putting your love into action?

Children of the light also walk in righteousness. That is doing what right, just, correct, fair, suitable. There is a right way of doing things and a wrong way. There are times the Christian does something and then realizes that hes done it wrong. There is an opportunity to be righteous and make it right. That means immediately returning the change that given you in error. That means even calling the IRS when you think they refunded you more then you thought they should. That means eating humble pie when you have stepped on someones toes in spiritual pride, or lashed out with your mouth or made a choice that you came later to see was not right, fair, just or correct for the other people involved. Righteousness is simply doing things right, or committing to making it right when things have gone wrong.

I think that is why in v.10 Paul tells us "trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." That phrase tells me that there will be times when I blow it and fail to please the Lord. There are things that I still need to learn, I have not arrived yet. I do not know it all. Righteousness does not

mean perfection. It is a dogged commitment to pursuing what is right. Put it to the test. Ask yourself. Is what I am doing right now...pleasing to the Lord? Is pleasing the Lord in absolutely everything my desire. Is that what I am trying to learn? One who is walking in the light put his effort is asking not: What would I like. Or what would please me? Or even what would please someone else. The people pleasers can look so good and yet can be so destructive. No. The question we need to be asking ourselves is What would please God? How should I respond to my wife so that God would be pleased with my words, actions and attitudes. How would God be pleased by the way I spend my money this week? How can I best please God with what I choose to do on my time off? At work? At home? When I'm with my friends? God wants goodness and righteousness and truth to invade every area of my life. And children of the light who walk in the light spend time thinking of ways that they can be truthful, consistent faithful, sincere in their speech and actions. Right and fair and put their love into action. Homework this week. I want us to often ask yourself, "What would most please God." Some of you are going to going to be challenged with a decision you must make that is not easy. Some of you are going to need to respond to a relationship that is very challenging. Someone here is going to have a financial choice. Someone else is going to need to make a choice on a future direction. I want us to not leave God sitting on the sidelines hoping he likes our choice. I want us to be asking the question. "What would most please God" Are these words and this tone of voice most pleasing to God?" You know you are children of the light, because you are walking in goodness, truth and righteousness and your hearts desire is constantly moved by the question, what could I do that would most please God in this situation.

Verse 10 is closely connected with v.17 that says "so don't be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord." We tend to think about the will of God in terms of specifics in guidance on major decisions. God who do you want me to marry. Where am I to go to

school. God what job am I to pursue. God is very concerned with our big and little decisions. We are invited to bring all those things before His throne. Certainly we need to come asking that it be our desire to please him in all we do. But understanding the will of God here in v.17 is not simply making sure we have God's stamp of approval for guidance. Understanding God's will is more about who we are than what we do. It's not in the big decisions that we live out who we are it is in the myriad of little decisions. The step by step each day. The walking putting one foot out in front of the other. It is the putting off of the old life and putting on the new. If we are solid in who we are and whose we are all the rest will fall into place. It always does. We need obedience more than we need guidance. The Israelites in the wilderness had a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to guide them, what they needed most was not the next GPS coordinates for the next days hike. They need to obey and walk in God's will, doing whatever is pleasing to Him in all they do. That is walking in the light. Now that takes faith doesn't it. That means we are stepping out in obedience even when it seems like we might miss out or get ripped off or lose or be ignored. That is faith. Believing in God's promises even when the whole world around you is screaming that you are an idiot for missing out. Hebrews 11:6 "Without faith it is impossible to please him." If we are going to understand what the will of God is for us. If we are going to try and do what is pleasing to the Lord, then it is going to take us to move in faith, acting solely on the basis of God's word. God's word says don't act immoral, every hormone in your body is screaming feed me. But faith believes God's word and self-control says no I'm going to trust that God has something far better for me.

If we walk in faith trying to please God it means there will be times when we can't see the positive outcome. That makes it faith. If we could always see how it would come about. If we could always see how its better to walk in the light and please God. If we could always see that following God is an immediate better choice then there would not be

faith. For faith is believing God when we can't see the results. Can't see the green grass because we are still walking through the dark shadow of death. It is when we walk in the haze of confusion and doubt that God lifts up faith. Faith pleases God because it believes even in the face of darkness. Faith pleases God because it sees the darkness as an opportunity to shine. Look at verse 15-16 "Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise... The unwise is foolish and lives as if God does not exist. The wise man acknowledges God in all his ways. So the wise man then makes the most of the time, realizes that we don't have a moment to lose. We cannot waste a single opportunity to shine, because the opportunity to shine around us is great....just look how dark it is. It is in the darkest night that light shines the brightest. The problem is most Christians don't look at the darkness and evil days in that way. Most of us look at the dark and evil days as an overwhelming defeating discouragement. That word making the most is the same word used for "redeeming", it's a market place term that means; to buy up. Instead of looking around at the situation we have been placed in and get so very discouraged we are ready to give up. We who are much loved children of God ought to look at the dark and evil days and say, "What an incredible opportunity to shine." You may feel like you are not much at all. Maybe a cheap little sparkler. A sparkler in the afternoon day might be unimpressive and hard to see. But Oh, what beauty is a sparkler at midnight. It can be seen for miles. Have you ever thanked God that He has sovereignly placed you in the Pacific Northwest, the pagan northwest and even in a place like Yacolt that the police call meth mountain and even the Indians labeled as Yacolt the valley of the haunted spirits. Have you ever thanked God for placing you in a dark and evil messed up family. In a dark, messed up neighborhood? For it is in the dark that children of the light can shine the brightest. We waste the opportunity is all around us. As are the trials. Are you thanking God for your trials? That's hard isn't it. But if we never went through trial how could we ever

show that He is sufficient for every trial? If we never needed God to help us through the demands of life, how could we possibly ever discover that he is wholly sufficient and his resources are always enough. Dark days, difficulties will come. But they are not sent to kick you back, but to propel you forward. So don't look at them that way. Peter in I Peter 4:12 wrote, "Don't feel like you are the only one with difficult circumstances and everyone else is having an easy cushy time in life. "Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial of faith which has come upon you as though some unusual thing has happened to you" Walk wisely. Understand the times you live in and buy up opportunities to shine your light of faith that please God. Do it now. Don't believe the lie that you will always have time later in your life to really get serious and shine for God. Don't be foolish make the most of the time. V.14 wake up sleeper. Get up out of your coffin and walk in the light and Christ will shine on you." What I love about God is that he delights in taking dead things and exposing them to the light of His truth and breathing His life into them. Perhaps this morning God wants to breathe life into you. Perhaps this morning you have heard God speak and the light that you have for so long ignored, put off and maybe even have anger toward. You can see this morning that light is not your competition, it is your lighthouse, your salvation. You are tired of walking in darkness and are ready to bury your pride and walk in the light. Don't put it off. The days are short and the days are evil. Don't believe the lie that you can put it off until later. Some other time when you think you've had all your fun and then wake up to realize that wasn't any fun and all. Exciting at first sure, but has a wicked, deadly after bite. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world....he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life. What is stopping you from coming to him in faith this morning. Faith means you aren't going to have all your questions answered. Faith means you won't see it all. But faith means that you know the light of God's truth really is true, for the spirit in side is giving

witness. It's true. You can no longer deny it. Don't let doubt or pride block you from God and a walk of obedience in the light. If you want to make that decision to follow God this morning, I am going to pray with you. There may be others that know they have been walking in the darkness, maybe just on the edges but its too close for comfort or righteousness and you want to get back into the light. I want to pray with you as well. I also want those who are drawn by the spirit to come up to the front here and pray for any reason at all to come and pour out your hear to God. We need not fear His light, a light so brilliant we might be consumed by fear were we not consumed by His love.