

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 5:8-16

Session 44: Being Light in the Lord

I once heard a preacher recount his childhood years at church. He said, “When my preacher said he was going to be preaching out of the gospels, I knew it was going to be a good sermon, because it would be a story about Jesus. But if the preacher said he was preaching out of Paul’s epistles, I knew it was going to be hard to pay attention because there was no story involved.”

So, to begin today’s session, I am going to start with a story from the gospels, not so much to keep you awake, but in order to segue us into Paul’s point in Ephesians 5:8.

I want us to look at a statement that Jesus made in John 8. To get the background, we turn back to chapter 7.

John 7:1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.² Now **the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.**

In the fall of each year, Israel celebrated three feast days in the same month. The Feast of Trumpets marked the Jewish New Year. The 10 days following the Feast of Trumpets are called the “Days of Awe,” which lead up to the Day of Atonement on the 10th day. Four days after the Day of Atonement is the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feast of Tabernacles lasts for eight days. This year (2024) it begins in 3 days, beginning at Sundown on October 16th and ending at nightfall on October 23rd.

Returning to John’s gospel, a few days later, Jesus left Galilee and came to Jerusalem while the Feast of Tabernacles is underway.

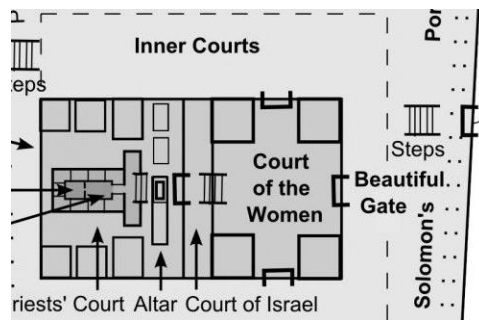
John 7:14 Now about the midst of the feast **Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.**

During the feast, Jesus is showing up at the Temple and teaching all who will listen. This is what He does each day. Now, we take the story into chapter 8.

John 8:2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

While He is teaching, the Pharisees bring him a woman caught in adultery.

John 8:3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery...

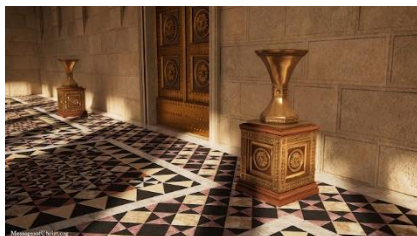


Where does this event take place? It takes place in the **Court of the Women**...



...at the steps before **the gate of Nicanor** (nigh cane' ore).

This is the gate between the Court of the Women and the courtyard of the temple which contained the brazen altar and the laver of water.



The Court of the Women was surrounded by pillared colonnade porches. In these covered porches were situated 13 trumpet shaped chests, for the tithes and offerings of the people. This is the place the Bible refers to as the Treasury.



On the west side of the Court of the Women, there were 16 semi-circle steps that led up to a semi-circle porch at the actual gate of Nicanor. This is the place where many things took place: the judging of adultery, the singing of songs in celebration, and as a favorite teaching spot for Jesus.



This is the place where the tithes and offerings were brought.

In the picture, you can see the massive lamps that were lit for seven days during the Feast of Tabernacles. This porch at the gate of Nicanor is where Jesus was teaching during the Feast of Tabernacles. This is why they bring the woman caught in adultery to him; this is the place where she would have been judged.

After the Lord tells the woman to “go and sin no more” (verse 11), Jesus continues to teach the people who have gathered to hear Him teach. As He does, He says something astounding.

John 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world:** he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Why is this astounding? Because of the time when, and the place where, Jesus is when He says He is “the light of the world.”



So, when is Jesus saying this? Jesus says this during the Feast of Tabernacles. During the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) there was a great ceremony called the "Illumination of the Temple," which involved the ritual lighting of four golden oil-fed lamps in the Court of the Women.

These lamps were huge candelabras (seventy-five feet high) lighted in the Temple at night to remind the people of the pillar of fire that had guided Israel in their wilderness journey. On top of the candelabra were bowls that held 65 liters of oil. All night long the light shone their brilliance it is said, illuminating the entire city.

With the lights having illuminated the Temple for the feasts, Jesus stands in that same court and declares that He is the light of the world. That no doubt was meant to hearken them back to Isaiah 60 where, in the kingdom, God would be an everlasting light to Israel.

Isaiah 60:19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

Today, we begin a new form of doctrine in Ephesians 5:8-17, where Paul will be talking about issues of light and darkness.

Ephesians 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but **now are ye light in the Lord:** walk as children of light:

Immediately, Paul makes a very dramatic statement; that every believer in Jesus Christ is “light in the Lord.” Paul doesn’t say that we “have some light,” or “there is some light in us,” but he says that right now, at this very moment while you are listening, wherever you are, you are “light in the Lord.” This is a status, or position which is true of us because we are “in Christ.” Our position is that of being “light.”

When it comes to living for God, the book of Romans laid a foundation in us. Corinthians and Galatians supply the “level and plumbline” to keep the building of our edification from getting off. The book of Ephesians builds on top of the Romans foundation by advancing and perfecting our godly living.

In Ephesians 5:1-7, we finished up our initial study of the doctrine of being “followers of God.” I know that many of you have taken the doctrine to heart and you are working on it. That is how it is supposed to happen. On Sunday, we understand the doctrine, while the following week provides the opportunity to engage with the doctrine in reading, study, prayer, memorization, meditation, etc., so that we get the doctrine generated in us.

Remember, this is what a fully educated son is – someone who has every form of doctrine in Paul’s epistles working in them to some degree.

Being a “man of understanding” is not about who has the most answers to questions, or who knows the most about the Bible or who can explain a difficult verse. A Man of Understanding is describing anyone in this dispensation of grace (DoG) who has learned, and is putting into practice, the various forms of doctrine in Paul’s epistles. A Man of Understanding, or a fully-educated son, refers to the full spectrum of our edification, not to our theological knowledge.

Just because a person knows more than you do does not mean they are further along in their sonship life. Don't conflate these issues.

For example, a man may know Greek and Hebrew; he may utilize all the principles of hermeneutics; he may have studied ancient Jewish culture so that he can identify these things in a passage to understand what is being said; he may be able to identify the different types of writing in the Bible; and he may have written volumes of books on subjects in the Old Testament and New Testament; but none of this speaks to his edification. Edification is the issue – don't ever forget that. Being conformed to the image of Christ (CIC) is about your edification. Godliness is a product of edification. Being a fully educated son is about edification. Being what I call "A Man of Understanding" is about edification.

This is not to say that a man of understanding never makes a wrong decision, but he knows the doctrines and has them working in him, at least in their initial application. He will be more advanced in some doctrines than others. But he continues to work to apply them to every area of life.

The whole edification process is for us to be conformed to the image of Christ. That takes place as we are transformed by the doctrine so that we are no longer who we are now, trying to work with the doctrine, but the Spirit has taken the doctrine and conformed us to the image of Christ in this particular area, which, in turn, manifests itself by our outward behavior.

The next form of doctrine to advance our godly living is found in Ephesians 5:8-17. These verses are advancing our godly living on the basis of us now being "light in the Lord."

Let's begin by reading the entire form of doctrine.

Ephesians 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰ Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*. ¹² For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are

done of them in secret. ¹³ But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

¹⁴ Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. ¹⁵ See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, ¹⁶ Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

¹⁷ Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*.

This is Paul's final argument in the section of Ephesians which deals with our godly living, as the remainder of the book of Ephesians deals with our godly labor. Even though this is another argument, Paul's theme remains the same, we are to perfect our godly living, while being alert to the advanced tactics of the policy of evil (PoE) which work to prevent that.

And now, we come to Paul's final argument to advance our godly living and make us "wise men" in the faith. And this argument is on the basis of: Being light in the Lord.

Making multiple arguments is Paul's way of teaching practical sanctification. Since I have already prayed for this assembly to understand our sanctified position of being "light in the Lord," we need to talk about it for a moment.

Ephesians 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

Before we were saved, we weren't just "in darkness," we "were darkness." But, when we trusted Christ as Savior, we were made to be, at the very core of our being, "light in the Lord." As was stated earlier, this is a positional truth.

Because we have been made to be "light in the Lord," we have the ability to put our position in practice by "walking as children of light." When Paul asks us to "walk as children of light, he is talking about our daily living, not our position in Christ.

What I want us to see is that both of these are in the verse.

God is the one who made us to be light in the Lord. If we are to walk as children of light, then our walk must be based on this truth. In other words, this is the doctrine (the truth that we now are light in the Lord) which must motivate us as we live for God in our daily lives.

So, back to my point: giving us argument after argument is Paul's way of advancing our godly living, furthering our sanctified functional life, and perfecting our practical sanctification. He tells us something that is true, and that truth is to become the basis (the source) of our actions.

In other words, Paul is convincing us of something (that we are light in the Lord) which has the ability to work in our inner man and produce changes, as the Spirit of God, takes that form of doctrine and transforms us.

Paul doesn't just make a statement and let that be the end of it; he explains what he is talking about in three ways: 1) Paul starts with a positive argument in verses 8b-10. 2) Then he gives the negative argument in verses 11-14. 3) Finally, Paul makes the application in verses 15-17. And this will be the outline of our study.

Paul's Positive Argument

Ephesians 5:8 **For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are* ye light in the Lord:** walk as children of light:

Paul's first proposition takes us to the heart of the issue; the difference between the believer and the non-believer. When we trusted Christ, God did not just make some slight improvement on the surface, but he changed us at the very core of our being, in our inner man – the real us! We are a new creature in Christ. We were darkness, but now we are light! You can't depict a more dramatic change.

- We are no more under sin's dominion, but free from sin.
- We are no more servants, but sons.
- We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens.
- We are no more children, but adults.
- And now, we are no more darkness, but light.

The fact that "now are ye light in the Lord" refers to our status or position in Christ. Notice Paul contrasts who we were before we were justified unto eternal life (ye were sometimes darkness), with who we are now that we are saved (ye are light).

What does it mean that we are “light in the Lord?” The prepositional phrase “in the Lord” tells us how we are light. Apart from us being “in Christ,” we cannot be light in and of ourselves. We do not have that capacity in ourselves. But, in Christ, we are “light.”

What does Paul mean when he says we are “light?” The key to understanding this actually comes from the phrase “in the Lord.” We are “light in the Lord” in the sense that we are reflecting the light of Christ.

Donald Grey Barnhouse, was an American Theologian who lived from 1895 to 1960. He was a preacher, pastor, writer and radio pioneer. When he taught this passage in his church in Philadelphia, he made the analogy of the sun and the moon. He said, “When Christ was in the world, he was like the shining sun. When the sun sets, the moon comes up. The moon is a picture of believers, the Church. The Church shines, but not with its own light. It shines with the reflected light of Christ. Our light does not originate with us.”

Once we have been saved, we are completely transformed so that we reflect the “light of Christ” to all who see us. Doesn’t this remind you of our edification? The whole idea is to be conformed to the image of Christ. When people see us, they really see Him. And His light stands in stark contrast to the darkness of this world.

When we are admonished to “walk as children of light,” Paul is saying to conduct ourselves as reflectors of Christ.

Ephesians 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹ **(For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)**

Why would verse 9 immediately reference the fruit of the Spirit? Because walking as children of light is the fruit (or result) of knowing and putting into practice the truth that we are now “light in the Lord.” And what is that truth? That when we were saved, our old man in Adam died, which set us free from some things, and we were given a whole new identity in Christ, in which we were made righteous and holy. For what purpose? So we could reflect Christ in everything we do. So

we can manifest Christ at home, school, work, church, leisure, you name it. It is a 24/7 job.

In other words, the result (the fruit) of walking as children of light is that the Spirit produces in us, all goodness, righteousness and truth.

We aren't producing a walk as children of light, the Spirit produces that walk. That is what it means to "walk after the Spirit."

Galatians sets the "fruit of the Spirit" in opposition to "the works of the flesh."

Galatians 5:19 Now **the works of the flesh are manifest**, which are *these*;
Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Galatians 5:22 **But the fruit of the Spirit is** love, joy, peace, longsuffering,
gentleness, goodness, faith,

Paul wants us to realize, "I am *this*, I am no longer *that*, therefore, I can no longer do this, but I can do *that*, I can no longer say *this*, but I can say *that*, I can no longer think *this*, but I can think *that*."

When I say "cannot" do this or that, I am not saying you don't have the ability, but I am saying you can't, if you are going to live for God, as these things are contrary to God's will.

Let's make a practical application:

I can no longer do...what?

Now, apply the doctrine: why shouldn't I do these things? Because I am "light in the Lord," which means these kinds of actions do not reflect Christ. That is the motivation!

Now, instead of doing these things, what should we do?

But I can do...what?

Again, apply the doctrine: Why should I do these things instead? Because these things reflect the things of Christ.

What kind of things? Compassion, Truthfulness, Justice, Mercy, Forgiveness, Longsuffering, Patience, Goodness, etc.

I know we are not used to thinking this way before we act or speak, but wise men learn to do this constantly so that the Spirit can take the doctrine and transform us to such an extent that these things are as repulsive to us as they are to our Father. Our love for God is expressed in our desire to manifest, to both men and angels, the life and character of Christ, working in and through us.