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Sermon Notes

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## **Living as Children of the Light**

**Scripture: Ephesians 5:8-14**

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**Topics: Grace, Walk by Faith, Boldness & Courage, Glory of God, Godliness, Fruit of the Spirit**

### **Introduction**

Oh man, well I have so much joy in preaching the text that Walter just read for you. We get to talk today about the supernatural connection between light and fruitfulness, and I've been thinking much about light in my mind's eye, I was thinking about some of the most glorious sunrises I have ever seen in my life. God in His kindness has led me to some amazing places in the world and there are a lot of contestants, for that. I think about one sunrise, I saw over Acadia National Park in Maine, one of the most beautiful place I ever seen, up on a rocky kind of outcropping, and I could see the ocean and the rocky shoreline, as it went north and south away from where I was and that was beautiful. Of course, I think about in my mind's eye the Grand Canyon, and seeing that and how beautiful that was as the sun just filled in all of the deep, deep crevices of that canyon.

But one in particular that sticks out in my mind is the sunrise I saw in the northwest frontier province of Pakistan, and the Hunza Valley there and how amazing that was and the Indus river cutting through there and it's very arid except where there had been some human irrigation, and there was just a line of green below that irrigation, above it was just very desert-like. Spectacular mountains there, the Karakoram mountain, the second highest mountain range in the world. And then the Hunza Valley, one of their agricultural specialties is cherries, kind of white-pink cherries, they were incredibly sweet. And we were there right at the harvest time. And all of these blankets were under these trees and they would just come and beat the branches with sticks and they would just fall down, and we can eat as many as we wanted, and they were just so delicious. And I can picture the sunrise coming up in my mind now, and how beautiful that was.

### *The Light and the Darkness*

And as I come to Ephesians 5:8-14, I think about this supernatural connection between the light of Christ, the light of the Gospel, the light of truth and the fruit that God wants to see in our lives, we have a powerful image here, of light and darkness. And that expresses very clearly the kind of lives that God wants us to live in this present age. The Bible is full of language of light, light is a very important theme in the Bible. Right from the very beginning, as "God created the heavens and the earth and the earth was formless and empty and darkness over the surface to the deep, and the Spirit was hovering over the waters." And then the first thing that God says in the Bible is, "*Let there be light*". I've meditated on that before, I've tended, I think, erroneously thought the first thing God ever made was light, but it seems that the first thing He made was the heavens and the Earth, but it was dark, and the first thing God said in the Bible is "*Let there be light*", and that just shows a desire that God has to tell us what there is. What really exists, what He made, that we would see it and know it, it's a sense of revelation that God wants us to know the truth of what's out there in the heavens and the earth. And so He created light. That's the way I understand it.

And then also from the beginning of the Gospel of John, we have that same imagery, coming over from Genesis 1 where it says, *"In the beginning was the Word [Jesus Christ] and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning through Him all things were made and without Him [Jesus Christ] nothing was made that has been made and in Him [in Christ] was life and that life was the light of men and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not understood it."* So the word darkness, then means far more than just the absence of light in the Bible, more than that, because in Genesis 1, God separated the light from the darkness, and very poignantly, He called the light good. Doesn't say anything about the darkness, but the clear implication there is that, it is the light that is good, not the darkness. And we get that even more clearly in 1 John chapter 1, where we're told, *"God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."* We're going to come back to that passage later in the sermon but there's that clear sense that the light is beautiful, and good, and attractive, and the darkness is evil.

One of the plagues of Egypt in Exodus 10:21, the Lord said to Moses, *"Stretch out your hand toward the sky, so that darkness will spread over all of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt."* It's a very powerful statement, a darkness that can be felt, a pervasive evil that settles around, and in us, like a damp fog, there's that sense of a darkness in this present age, a darkness that can be felt, I think that that is a description of Satan's evil reign on planet Earth. His evil kingdom, which covers the whole earth. We're going to see this later in the next chapter in Ephesians 6:12, if indeed we ever get there, I think we're going to get there, but some of you are commenting to me, but bear with us I think if God gives us grace we'll get to Ephesians 6. And then perhaps even beyond. But there in Ephesians 6:12 it says, *"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark age", "or this present darkness."* And so, Satan has this dark realm, this dark organized kingdom with rulers and authorities, and powers, and dominions. And it is this present darkness, and Jesus is the light of the world shining in that darkness. As we're told beautifully in Isaiah 9:2, *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, and those living in the land of the shadow of death, the light has dawned, and that light is Jesus Christ."*

So when Jesus entered the world, the light began shining and the devil has never been and never will be able to put it out, he cannot extinguish it, he cannot understand it, he cannot block it, he cannot stop it, that's the light of Christ. And when Christ entered your life, a supernatural light began shining in your hearts. Which 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, *"It's the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ"*, in other words how magnificent and great and glorious God is when you look into the face of Christ. That's the light that is shining in the heart of every true Christian, is a sense of the glory of God in Christ.

### *We Must Bear Fruit*

Now, Paul calls on each one of us in this text, then to bear fruit from that light. One of the amazing features of light, is that it is essential to all life on Earth. There's an intimate connection between light and life, it's essential to all food, to the entire food chain. Everything starts with light. Here, I speak of the marvel of photosynthesis. Now, that's a bit weird that we're talking about photosynthesis, and I'm not going to say much about it, except that the word just means 'manufacturer or creation from light.' So the manufacturer of things from light. And so we're surrounded every day by the marvels of biology, the marvels of life. And how God in a very mysterious way uses light, at every moment to create chemical processes in plants that produce ultimately fruit, and all life comes from that process. Now, I don't pretend to stand in front of you here, and explain exactly how it happens. But somehow the light shines on, let's say the leaves of an apple tree, and as the light shines on that, and as the soil conditions are right, and if the tree is healthy and there's rain, the proper amount of rain as the light is being soaked in by these green leaves, something is happening within those leaves that enables the apple tree to produce buds, flowers and buds.

And then eventually at the right time, you see the makings, the very beginnings of an apple and if all things are right for the growing conditions at the right time, on a warm autumn day there's going to be a harvest of apples. And one of the favorite things my family is, love to do in the past, is go pick apples, and just the full fruit of all of the light that that healthy apple tree has been drinking in all summer long and be able to pick an apple right out and just eat it right away and it's so crisp and hard and sweet, you know what I'm talking about, my mouth is watering already. Just the tart, sweetness, and the juice just ready, somehow in a way that

I don't think we'll ever fully understand. Light has produced fruit.

It's a marvelous world that God has made, and Paul uses that kind of analogy in Ephesians 5:8-14, to speak of the lifestyle of the genuine Christian. And in this marvelous passage, Paul is commanding us to walk, or live our daily lives to walk as children of the light and then so doing produce the fruit of the light which he says "*consists in all goodness, all righteousness and all truth.*" We'll talk about all of that, but by contrast in the same passage where we see that fruitless deeds of darkness, he says. The lifestyle of the non-Christian, it produces nothing of value, nothing that commends our Lord or glorifies our Lord, nothing positive of eternal consequence comes from that life of darkness. This is the contrast we have before us in today's text. So, along with it comes the constant call to each of us as believers in Christ, to be fruitful. To bear fruit. And that we evaluate our lives on the basis of fruit. So today, I'm going to call you to look at your life honestly and see what fruit there is in your life. I've said again and again, and I'm going to keep saying, if there's no fruit, there's no life, do not be deceived. And so I want you to be able to look at the fruit of your life and know yourself and to understand the kind of life that really does lead to Heaven and be aware of that and be clear about that. So you evaluate yourself, your own fruitfulness.

I want you to see, is there something sweet, is there something delightful, something honoring to God, something that He's pleased with in your life, something that's coming from your love of Jesus and your knowledge of the word and the power of the Spirit in your life? Is there something flowing? Is there something the Lord can move through the garden and pluck from you, and enjoy in your life, you have to evaluate yourself. And if there is no fruit, it's not too late, there is time for you to repent and trust in Christ, and come to salvation and begin bearing fruit of righteousness.

So look again at the words, Walter's already read them. But I just want us to immerse ourselves in these words, and understand them. Beginning of verse 8, "*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret, but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible.*" This is why it is said, '*Wake up, O sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.*'"

### **What You Were and What You Are (vs. 8)**

#### *Only A Good Tree Can Bear Good Fruit*

So, let's begin with this in verse 8, what you were and what you are. What you were and what you are. This is one of those magnificent verses, that encapsulates the supernatural change that comes on a genuine Christian, supernatural transformation, something that we cannot do on our own. Only the sovereign grace of God can bring this about. Now behind this is the concept, and Jesus taught it very plainly. "Only a good tree can bear good fruit." So the immediate focus of these verses is be what you are, if you're a Christian. Be what you are. So we're going to be discussing fruit. But a fundamental change in nature must happen in you in order to bear good fruit for God.

Jesus taught us this in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:17-20. He said, "*By their fruit, you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes on thorn bushes or figs from thistles. Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit. But a bad tree cannot bear bad fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus by their fruit, you'll recognize them.*" So, the key principle there is a tree is known by its fruit. It is impossible for a good tree to bear bad fruit, Jesus says and a bad tree to bear good fruit. Now, obviously we know in Galatians 5, we're mixed, and so there's a lot of things coming out of us. And James says, "*Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. This should not be.*" We understand that. I'm not getting into all that. I'm just saying essentially, if there is any good fruit in your life, it's because God has done a sovereign work in you to make you a good tree, and it is impossible for a bad tree to produce good fruit, that's what he's saying.

Now, I would say only a specialist, a trained botanist, let's say, or agricultural expert can tell the difference from one, let's say tree limb to the next or by looking at bark or the roots, right? We can't do that. Maybe some of you I'm talking to today, you're specially gifted people. And if I showed you five different leaves, you could tell me what those trees are. I can't do it. There's no way I could do it. But I think almost every toddler can tell the difference between a peach tree and an apple tree at harvest time. I mean, "that's a peach tree Mommy, that's an apple tree." We just know because you know what a peach looks like and what an apple looks like, and so by their fruit, by what is coming out of that tree, that's how you know what kind of tree it is. So the fundamental spiritual concept here is a bad tree cannot produce good fruit.

### *You Once Were Darkness*

In order for us to change the fruit of our lives, then we must become essentially different. We must become a different kind of tree. Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 12:33, *"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit."* But you realize when you make a tree good He is actually telling you something in command form that you cannot do. You have no power to do that, you cannot make the tree good. You can't make yourself become good, it's actually impossible. Only the sovereign grace of God can make a previously bad tree to become good, so it bears good fruit for God, something only God can do. We who loved wickedness, we who loved darkness, we who loved to sin, how can we be transformed?

Jeremiah put it very plainly in Jeremiah 13:23. *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing wickedness."* You can't do it. Your habit patterns have shown that you love wickedness, etcetera. You can't change yourself any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin. Something only God can do. And we're told in this text, amazingly. You once were darkness. Just be amazed Christian brother and sister, what God has done to you. You were darkness. Look at it, look at the words, verse 8, "You once were darkness." Now, darkness is moral evil, it's wickedness, it's rebellion against Almighty God. First John 1:5, *"This is the message we heard from the beginning, and declared to you God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."* You were once, at one time in the past, in the days before you are Christians, you were darkness.

Now, notice he doesn't blame your environment. He doesn't talk about what kind of family life, you were raised in, or any of those kinds of things. He doesn't talk about the fact that you lived in darkness, here. He's not actually saying this. He doesn't say you are walking in a land of darkness surrounded by dark people and all that. Those things are all true and taught elsewhere. Here He doesn't say that, He says *"You were darkness."* Darkness was in the very fiber of your being, it was in your heart, it was what you loved, it's how you lived and it wasn't accidental. We didn't just do dark things. We actually loved the darkness. Jesus taught this plainly in John 3:19, *"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."* That's who we were. So, darkness, moral evil penetrated to the very core of our being.

Look back, maybe one chapter, in Ephesians 4:18, speaking about the lost, the pagans, the Gentiles who are unconverted. He said in Ephesians 4:18, *"They are darkened in their understanding, and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to the hardening of their hearts."* That's the darkness of the pre-Christ condition, it's the very thing asserted earlier. If you look even further in Ephesians 2:1-3, as we said time and again, *"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live. When you follow the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient, all of us also lived among them at one time. Gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts, like the rest we were by nature objects of wrath."*

Now, as I was thinking about *"you were darkness"*, and all that, I know that some of you were raised in Christian families. Maybe you came to Christ at a very early age. We do believe that that you can be genuinely converted very, very young. But I'm just banking on the statement that Paul makes when he says, *"All of us lived among them."* This is true of all of us, even if you were converted at an early age and you didn't have much chance to develop in wickedness and sin, just as a son or daughter of Adam, that's what you

were born into, that darkness and wickedness and if God hadn't converted you, you would have continued to love darkness as the rest of the human race does. So that's true of all of us. So apart from Christ, the darkness of evil penetrated our minds how we thought our hearts what we loved, our wills, what we chose. And we weren't merely surrounded by an evil world, fighting off evil temptations, doing the best we could, being basically good people. That's not what's taught here. We were darkness itself. We were part of the darkness and we added to the darkness of the world. Jesus said this in Matthew 6:22-23, *"The eye is the lamp of the body." If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness, and if the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness?*

#### *A Decisive Break Between Us and Darkness*

Well, that's what we were. Just completely characterized by darkness, our spiritual eyes were blind, we couldn't see invisible spiritual realms, we couldn't see Christ crucified and resurrected and God in His glory, we didn't understand Satan and all of his power, we didn't know any of these things, we were in the dark, we were blind, and we were darkness. Don't you love these verses? *"For you were once darkness, but now you are children of the light."* I mean, we just can't ever stop celebrating that.

It just dwarfs any problem you're having in your life right now, it dwarfs any sadness that you brought in here today. If you're a genuine Christian, this swallows up in victory anything that's dragging you down, now it's just so infinitely greater than anything that could ever happen or ever has happened to you. You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. And how magnificent is that. Oh God, give God thanks for your conversion, it's a supernatural act of grace. It's something you couldn't have done to yourself, and He speaks of the transformation that's occurred for us. We're not merely surrounded by light, we're not merely interested in light, we're not merely walking in light, we are light now. Just every bit as much as we were at once darkness. Light characterizes us now in Christ. Light defines you, it permeates you, it characterizes you, it's a radical change, that God's worked in your soul. You've been born again by the sovereign power of the Spirit of God. And you have been rescued from the dominion of darkness, Colossians 1:13 and *"you've been transferred over into the Kingdom of the Beloved Son,"* that's where you live. Jesus said in John 5:24, *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes Him who's sent me has eternal life, and will not be condemned."*

He has crossed over from death to life. It's permanent. You will never be darkness again. Never. Forever, you will be light in the Lord. Isn't that amazing? Think about that. There's nothing the darkness can do to get you back. Now this new light, as we've already said in 2 Corinthians 4:6, is shining from within us. It's an internal work, that's done. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ is shining within our hearts. And we love it, we love how glorious God is in Christ. It's absolutely the ravishing delight of our souls. We love it.

#### *Christ is the Light of the World*

Now, this is something that God has done inside you if you're a Christian. Jesus is the light of the world. He said in John 9:5, *"While I am in the world, I am the light of the world, and in Him was life, and that life was the light of men, and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not understood it, the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being."* And Phillip said, *"Show us the Father and it will be enough for us"* and Jesus said *"Don't you know me? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."*

But we're told in 1 Peter 1, we haven't seen Jesus. Oh yes, you have. The eyes of your heart through the faith in the Gospel, through the word of God, you've seen Jesus spiritually, the eyes of your heart were enlightened, and you now see Him and you see how radiant and glorious He is in the crucifixion, in the resurrection, and you love it, and you delight in it. And Jesus reveals the Father to us. The world was in darkness, alienated from God. Have you ever walked in an unfamiliar room with furniture in it and especially if it's a kid's room and it's not cleaned up? Have you ever walked in a totally dark room and hurt yourself? The thing that used to get me when I was growing up was Lego blocks. Have you ever stepped on a Lego block, with bare feet on a hardwood floor? Worse. Have you ever jumped from a bunk bed down on to a

Lego block? I think, you actually can see colors in the dark when that kind of thing happens, something happens. I don't know what it is, but it's unforgettable.

And so, non-Christians, they're moving through God's universe bumping into things and hurting themselves. They're bumping into furniture because they don't see that it's there. And they're falling into pits that they didn't see the enemy had dug, "if the blind lead the blind, both of them will fall into the pit," Jesus said. So there's this image of they don't have any idea what's going on. They just can't see the lay of the land, they can't see what's in the room, they don't know what's happening, they're blind. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit, but verses 13-14, everything exposed by the light becomes visible. I think that's a better translation than the ESV. I think in this case, for it is light that makes everything visible, not everything that becomes visible is light, that just isn't true. I mean think about it. But it is light that makes things become visible, and so it is light that tells you what's where. What evil is and what good is, and where God is and where Satan is, and you can see it all now, and you can see the lay of the land and now you got it. And that's that spiritual vision that God gives us when we are converted.

And now, not only that, now that we can see light, and delight in light and all that, but we are light and we have become like Jesus in a smaller way, the light of the world. We have become the light of the world, Christians have. Jesus, I know he said, *"I'm the light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* John 8:12. But he also said in the Sermon on the Mount *"You are the light of the world." A city on a hill cannot be hidden, neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it up in its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.* That's a life of fruit that's going to lead people to ask questions and eventually to come to Christ and they're going to glorify God. That's what's going on. So we are called on be light, and to shine light. To be holy and to show what we are. So here's how it works, this is New Testament sanctification. You are light, so live like light. You are holy, so be holy. You are a child to the King, now live like it. That's how sanctification is taught in the New Testament. What you are, now live it. Maybe you didn't know what you were. But you are light, if you're a Christian, that's what he's saying.

### **Producing Fruit as Children of the Light (vs. 8-10)**

#### *The Command: Live/Walk as Children of the Light*

Secondly, we have this in verses 8-10, producing fruit as children of the light. The command here is *"live as children of the light or walk"*, is more literalistically true, *"walk as children of the light."* So our daily life should show light, that's in our souls, our hearts. There should be none of the darkness, the former darkness of the pagan world that we've been walking through in Ephesians 4. From those verses 17, 18, 19, all the darkness of the ignorance and the hardening of heart, and all that. And then he gets into specific patterns in chapter 4 verse 19, the enslavement to lust of the flesh that corrupted life. The lying in 4:25, the sinful anger in 4:26, the stealing in 4:28, the corrupted talk in 4:29, anything that grieves the Holy Spirit of God. In 4:30, the bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander of 4:31, the unforgiveness of 4:32. The sexual immorality of 5:3. The impurity, the greed of 5:3. The idolatry of that, 5:3. Also the obscenity, foolish talk and coarse joking of 5:4, all of these things and many other patterns besides, they formed darkness. That's what the darkness is.

Each of them though, in Ephesians 4 and 5 was giving out a corresponding pattern that drives it out. You remember, we've been through each of these, but instead now, it's truth-telling, hard work, generosity to the poor and needy, speaking wholesome words, that edify and give grace to those who listen, a sweet forgiving temper which keeps no record of wrongs, sexually-pure, free from immorality, free from idolatry, a heart that's free from covetousness, living instead for constant fellowship with Almighty God, that's what it means to walk as a child of the light.

John uses the same expression in 1 John 1:5-7, *"This is the message we heard from Him and declared to you: God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him and yet walk in*

*the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth, but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies.*” It's powerful, continual present. Purifies us from all and righteousness. That drives out perfectionism. We're not talking about perfection. Cannot be. You can walk in the light, and still need an ongoing purification from the blood of Jesus. We all do that. But there is a life that's righteous and holy, and good, and possible. Not perfection, but it's walking in the light as He is in light, and the blood of Jesus purifies you ongoing.

### “Children of the Light”

And he calls us here, children of light. It speaks of our transformed nature by the Spirit of God, we have believed the Gospel, and “He gave us the right to become children of God.” Children born by the sovereign grace of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Not biological reproduction but a supernatural work of God's grace, and we have become children of the light. And I love it when you see large families with kids and they all share some genetic link. Alright, it could be like curly brown hair, or it could be a certain shape of the nose, or something like that. And you just know that they're all sons and daughters of the same pair, the same couple.

For us as children of God, we're not sharing physiological things, it's moral, it just has to do with how you live, how you talk, the things you love. And so, we are to show the family likeness as children of the light, that's what he's saying. And we are to produce fruit, look at verses 9-10. *“For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth and find out what pleases the Lord.”* So continual abiding in Jesus results in fruit bearing. There's going to be fruit in your life, and this fruit is the proof of your Christianity. No fruit, no Christianity. I hope we're done here in the Bible belt with nominalism, and the idea that it's okay, it's enough to have been baptized in a church member for many decades. Out with such a religion, out with such a Christianity, it's a counterfeit. *“Let no one deceive you with empty words.”* That is not true Christianity, no fruit no Christianity, no justification, no forgiveness of sins, condemnation on Judgment Day.

### The “Fruit of the Light”

So the fruit, is there fruit in your life? That's what you're looking for. *“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit,”* John 15:2. “Such branches he collects up and they're burned in the fire.” John 15 and verse 6. So we are, like John the Baptist said to the Scribes and Pharisees who are very religious, *“You brood of vipers. Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath, produce fruit in keeping with repentance?”* That's what we're talking about. There's a life of fruitfulness, that comes from genuine conversion, and as we abide in Christ, that will come. Now, what is the fruit?

### Goodness, Righteousness, Truth

Well, he says, the fruit consists number one, *“in all goodness, righteousness and truth,”* and then number two, in what pleases the Lord. They end up being the same thing, but he just gives us two different ways of talking about it. So the fruit consists” in all goodness,” and put the word “all” in all three of them, “all goodness, all righteousness and all truth.” That's what the fruit is. So what do we mean by these things? Well, I was meditating on the goodness of God. Now goodness comes to the very essential nature of His being. Do you remember when Moses was up on the mountain, he said *“Now show me your glory.”* Remember that? Or God said to Moses, “I will cause all of my goodness to pass in front of you.” It's like that almost sums up who I am. What sums up my glory is my goodness, God's goodness. So it consists in His benevolence, and His loving kindness, and His free generosity to all the creatures that He's made. He's just lavishly generous to everything He has created.

### God's Goodness to All

It says in Psalm 145:9, *“The Lord is good to all, He has compassion on all He has made”*, in the same Psalm, Psalm 145:16, *“You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.”* So God just feeds everything and just by His goodness, He's just lavishly generous. So every time a thirsty animal, like a deer, a panting deer finds a mountain brook and drinks to her heart's content, that deer is experiencing the goodness of God, though she doesn't know it, and she's not in the image of God, cannot know that God gave her that water, but we know. And every time the skies pour down rain, and the showers come in the spring, and the land just drinks in the goodness from God and starts to bud and flourish and flower, that land is

drinking in the goodness of God.

Picture in your mind's eye a zoo, and you go around to one of the key exhibits. Okay? The lion. Alright. And it's 2 o'clock in the afternoon and it's a warm summer day, not too hot, warm, though. 80 degrees. And there's this huge flat rock. Big, big rock. Where is that lion right there? 2:00 in the afternoon. It is just laying on that warm rock sleeping. I'm like, "I didn't pay for that. I want to hear roaring, I want to see some..." But the lion is just drinking in the goodness of God in that sunshine. It doesn't know it. But it's drinking in goodness from God, He is good to all that He's made. God's goodness flows like a river of blessing on all creation, like sunshine and rain, and cool breezes, and the fragrance of spring and every succulent peach, you ever ate or every warm loaf of bread you ever took out of the oven and after it cooled you sliced it and ate it, it's goodness of God, and God shows that goodness to the evil and the good alike, to his friends and his enemies, that's just the goodness of God. Surely, "God is good to everything that he has made." So the fruit of the light consists in being like that to the people in your life, you're just an open stream of benevolence and goodness to the people who know you. It just flows through you. People just blessed by being around you. They're blessed by your words, they're blessed by your money, they're blessed by the way you spend your time, they're blessed by your goodness.

Now, you weren't good at one point, but now you are. And the fruit of the light consists in being good, like God is good, even to your enemies. And then, all righteousness, what does that mean? It means living up to God's perfect moral standard. I have a picture in my mind's eye, it comes from Amos 7 verses 7-8. And Amos, the visionary prophet, God showed him a vision, this is what he showed me. "*The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb.*" Now picture a plumb line, it's a string with a heavy metal weight that's pointed and He's hanging it there. "*And the wall had been built true to plumb.*" The plumb line is used for righteous building, if you can know what I say, the law of God is His standard of all righteousness, He always lives up to it. He displayed His righteousness at the cross. So, if you're a child of God, you're going to love God's law, and live up to it, you're going to show all righteousness as defined by the Law of God, not for the salvation of your soul, but because it's right, because you love it. You love the Law of God and you want to live up to it. All righteousness.

And then all truth, it corresponds to the Word of God. Jesus said in John 17:17 "*Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth*", and so everything that flows from the Scripture, everything that flows from the truth of God, especially as culminating in the person of Jesus, you just delight in the fruit of truth, you want to tell the truth. And it says next, proving or finding out what pleases the Lord. It's the summary of the life we should live at all times, we have as our ambition, whether we are at home or absent, to be pleasing to the Lord. To find out what's acceptable, what is pleasing. It's like in the NIV, it's like a scavenger hunt. "Hey, let's find out what pleases the Lord."

#### *Proving What Pleases the Lord*

So I went through and I just took that phrase, "pleased the Lord" or "what's pleasing to the Lord" and just positively, not that things that were not pleasing to the Lord, but I went through and found those things that are pleasing to the Lord. I'm not going to read all the verses, but believing in His Son pleases the Father. The Father is delighted when we believe in Jesus and love Him. And knowing Him pleases the Lord. "*Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his wealth, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he knows me.*" Just knowing Him, for you to know Him that pleases God, it pleases Him if you obey his commands, because to obey is better than sacrifice, it's just pleasing to God, to obey His commands. "*If you love me you'll obey me*" Jesus said. Fearing the Lord, the fear of the Lord pleases Him. "*The Lord delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love.*" Heartfelt worship. When you come here and you sing with all your heart and you just are lifting up spirit-filled songs, hymns, and spiritual songs from a full heart, not hypocritically, but from the heart, that pleases the Lord. It's a pleasing aroma. The prayers of the godly, are said to be a pleasing aroma that wafts up, that pleases the Lord for you to pray. The pure thoughts. "*May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you oh Lord.*" I want to speak pure words and think pure thoughts that will please the Lord. Proverbs 15:26, "*The Lord detests the thoughts of the wicked. But those of the pure are pleasing to*

Him." *"Bearing holy fruit in always,"* Colossians 1:10. *"Children obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord."*

So, you children, you teens, you young people, maybe you're in elementary school, you're in middle school, maybe you're in high school, and you're thinking, "This doesn't apply to me." It does. It pleases the Lord when you obey your parents gladly. It's pleasing to the Lord to obey them. To pursue righteousness pleases the Lord. To care for the poor and needy, pleases the Lord. To save souls. So that God can have that celebration in Heaven in the presence of the angels. Evangelism pleases the Lord. All of these things. Find out what pleases the Lord. Conversely, we're told to expose the fruitless deeds of darkness, verses 11 and following, *"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness but rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible."*

So this is negative sanctification. Don't partner yourself with people who are later going to experience the wrath of God. Don't buy shares in what they're doing. That's what I think the idea here is. Don't be partners with them. Don't have fellowship in the fruitless deeds of darkness. Don't partake in it. As it says in Revelation 18:4 about Babylon, *"Come out from her, my people, so that you will not share in her plagues and her judgments."* These are fruitless deeds of darkness. People who live for the deeds of darkness, at the end of their lives, they will look around at the evidence of a life of *"eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die."* And if you can just think image-wise their life, the floor of their life is cluttered with a bunch of empties, just empties everywhere on the floor. They look in the mirror and they see a sallow complexion and their skin is jaundiced and their eyes are bloodshot. The parties are over and now there's nothing but the wrath of God. Don't live like that.

It says in Proverbs 5:11-12, *"At the end of your life, you will groan. When your flesh and body are spent and you will say, 'How I hated discipline, how my heart spurned correction.'"* That's the empty, fruitless life of rebellion to God. It ends like the prodigal son feeding pig, saying, "How did I get here? I was lavishly blessed by my father with a big inheritance, spent it all on riotous living, and now I have barely rags on my body. I stink like pigs, and how much better it would be if I were in my Father's house." So don't live like that but that's not enough to just live and let live, it's just that's the way they're living.

### **Exposing the Fruitless Deeds of Darkness (vs. 11-13)**

We're actually called on to expose these fruitless deeds of darkness. We're called on to a courageous life of exposure. Now, the Greek word here means, to prove by argument, that's what it means. We're going to show by argument, not by having an argument but showing by the word of God that this is a wicked thing to do. We are to show by evidence how evil those sins are by the word of God and by how we live. We're to bring to bear with power, the word of God, seeking to produce faith in the souls of the people so that they'll be convicted of their sins.

#### *Speaking Against the Darkness: Our Spiritual Ancestors*

Christians have done this throughout church history. Their godly lives have exposed wickedness of the society around them. I think about John and Charles Wesley during the Methodist revival in the 1700s. In 1736, every sixth house in London was a gin house. It was a grog-shop, every sixth house in London. And the gin sellers would hang out boards announcing they would make a man drunk for a penny, dead drunk for two pennies, but give him free straw to sleep it off. In that year, 1736, five million gallons of gin were distilled in England. Seven years later, the number had risen to seven million gallons of gin. By 1750 it was up to 11 million gallons of gin. London doctors, around that time, reported that there were 14,000 medical cases beyond their ability to cure, directly related to drinking gin.

John Wesley's preaching among that of others and the revivals of God's work transformed that society. It didn't get rid of all drunkenness and it certainly not but, it transformed London, so that by the end of his life, by the end of the 1700s, things had radically changed. I think also about William Wilberforce and the

Clapham sect how they exposed the wickedness of the slave trade, and then eventually of slavery itself, over a 25-year fight. They just popped the lid off so people could see. You've seen the movie *Amazing Grace*? They put the fetters on the table and would say "Look, that's what they're wearing", as they're making that passage from Africa to the colonies. They exposed it, they made it clear.

Amy Carmichael, missionary in India exposed and fought hard against the wicked practice of child abuse in Hindu temples and that brought a great deal of suffering and persecution even attacks on her life. African-American leaders in our country, in the Civil Rights Movement, exposed the wickedness of the Jim Crow laws and segregation, and the unfairness and injustice and brought lasting change in our society. Christians nowadays are exposing the wickedness of Planned Parenthood and the selling of body parts from aborted babies, and just how disgusting and evil that is. We are to do this kind of ministry, we're to expose the fruitless deeds of darkness. It's so easy for us to live and let live, but we're called on to be light and salt, the light drives back the darkness.

I picture in my mind, a big bonfire in the middle of an Alaskan forest, and you can see the eyes and hear the howls of the wolves and the light keeps the darkness at bay. We are the light of the world, keeping the darkness, barely, the darkness at bay. We are the salt of the earth, so that the salt moves through the meat and it's a desiccant, and it keeps bacteria from spreading and the meat going bad later that afternoon, but salted meat will last a long time. We are a preservative, we're called on to do this, and this is going to take courage. I'm telling you, brothers and sisters, American Christians and Christians around the world. But I'm saying to you it's going to get harder and harder in our lifetime, to expose the fruitless deeds of darkness, but we're called on to do it. It's going to take courage, but we have to do it.

### **So... Rise and Let Christ Shine On You! (vs. 14)**

#### *Trust Jesus*

So finally, verse 14, *"Therefore it says, Awake O sleeper, arise O sleeper, arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you."* This is first and foremost a call to all of you who are unconverted. If there are any unconverted people, he is calling on you to wake up and rise up from the dead through faith in the Gospel. God sent His son who lived a sinless life and who died on the cross in the place of sinners like you and me so that our fruitless deeds of darkness will not condemn our souls, but rather, we can have forgiveness and eternal life. Trust in Jesus, crucified and resurrected, trust in Him and arise and wake up from your darkness and your dead life.

#### *Christians, Wake Up!*

But now, I want to say the same thing to you Christians, don't live like a non-Christian. Wake up. Wake up. I just sense a sleepiness sometimes in some Christians who are in this church or in Evangelical Christianity and I just feel like this text is just standing over us and saying, "Wake Up. The Night is nearly over. The day is almost here, it's coming close." I was having a conversation at breakfast, a couple of days ago, with a dear brother, and he was talking about the zeal of the cults. And they're out killing it. That means they are working hard in the name of a false Gospel and so are the Jihadists and the terrorists. They are fully alert in the name of a false God. We have the truth. And it's like, as Keith Green said years ago, like we're asleep in the light. This text is calling on us to wake up to the fact that our neighbors are dying in these sins and we're called on to expose the fruitless deeds of darkness. So let's be faithful. Let's wake up, and let's rise as from the dead and Christ will illuminate us every day. And let's live for the day and there's going to come a day when there'll be no more sun or moon or stars or lamp, but the glory of God will radiate the New Heavens and the New Earth. And there's going to be something that I can't fully understand but it's called "transparent gold". What is that, what is transparent gold? The streets are gold, but they are clear as crystal, and if the whole place is going to sparkle and radiate with the glory of God in Christ, let's live for the light of that New Heaven and New Earth, let's live lives of light. Now, close with me in prayer.

#### **Prayer**

Father, we thank you for the magnificence of this text, we thank you for all the things you've called on us to

do and to be. Oh God, I pray no one would leave here unconverted. No one would leave here sleepy, or in some kind of pattern of sin. And I ask for my brother and sister Christians O Lord, that we would be faithful to bring forth fruit and keeping with repentance and the fruit of the light that "*consists in all goodness, all righteousness, all truth.*" We pray these things in Jesus's name. Amen.