

Walk As Children Of Light

Ephesians 5:1-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I would love to read to you one of Luther's sermons on this text, it is enlightening. It would also run about an hour long. I will quote portions of it though, pointing those portions out to you.

Today, I'd like to focus a bit on this phrase in our text, "Walk as children of light!" What does that mean? Paul explains, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. And what is it that is good, and right, and true? Did you hear the text Paul wrote? Did you read it? If you are a Christian, there are things you will not do! Or maybe I should say, there are things you will do!

Dr. Luther says it this way in that sermon I told you about. This is a letter of admonition, instructing Christians, according to the plan underlying Paul's epistles, not to become sluggish and careless, but by their deeds to evidence their faith, and honor and proclaim the Word he has taught them; for the sake of the gentiles and unbelievers, that these may not take offense at the doctrine of Christ.

To begin with, having shown that we were made children of God through Christ, he admonishes us to be followers, or imitators, of the Father, as beloved children. He employs the most endearing of terms--"beloved children"--to persuade us by the Father's love to love even as we are loved. But what manner of love has God manifested toward us? It was not simply that love manifest in the fact that he gives temporal support to us unworthy beings in common with all the wicked on earth; that he permits his sun to rise on the just and on the unjust and sends rain on the grateful and on the ungrateful, as Christ mentions (Mt 5, 45) in connection with his command to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. Not only thus did God love us, but in a special way: he has given his Son for us. In addition to showering upon us both temporal and eternal blessings he has given his own self; he has completely poured out himself for us, with all he is, with all he has, with all he does,--and we were nothing but sinners, unworthy creatures, enemies and servants of the devil. More than this would be beyond even his grace and power.

He who despises such glow of love, which fills all heaven and earth and is beyond all power to comprehend it; who does not permit this love to kindle and incite in him love for his neighbor whether enemy or friend--such a one is not likely ever to become godly or loving by such measures as laws or commandments, instruction, constraint or compulsion.

Of course, in our text, this walking in love is also called walking as children of light. As children of light, there are things we will not do. *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of*

disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

Luther rightly points out this: Paul declares that the sin he indicates should not be **named** of the Ephesians. Unquestionably, among Christians there will always be some infirm one to fall; but we must labor diligently, correcting, amending and restraining. We must not suffer the offense to go unchallenged, but curtail and remedy it, lest, as remarked in the preceding lesson, the heathen stumble, saying: "Christians tolerate such vices themselves; their conduct is not different from our own." An occasional fall among Christians must be borne with so long as right prevails in general, and such things are neither tolerated nor taught, but reprov'd and amended.

Dear friends in Christ, our world today would not like Luther's words. We cannot correct someone in sin. Some people will misquote the Bible, "judge not; lest ye be judged." Others will push their version of tolerance, "We need to live and let live." Others are afraid that God is not Lord of His Church and suggest that we should turn a blind eye to sin, "The church is going to die, if we keep pushing people away."

Our text tells us. *For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*

I know what I could say, but I also know what people like to think, "what does Pastor Jerabek know, all he does is spout his own opinion." So, I'll just quote Luther's sermon here.

Hereby he (Paul) declares in dry words that the man who does not exhibit the fruits of faith is a heathen under the name of a Christian. Here is absolute condemnation in a word. The whoremonger is a denier of the faith; the unclean person is a denier of the faith; the covetous individual is a denier of the faith: all are rebellious, perjured and faithless toward God. Paul tells Timothy (I Tim 5, 8): "But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever." How could he utter anything more severe, more terrifying?

He begins, "For you may be sure of this." In other words: Doubt not; do not find vain comfort in the thought that this is a jest or an aspersion. A Christian name, and association with Christians, will count for nothing. It will profit you as little as it profits the Jews to be Abraham's seed and disciples of Moses. Christ's words (Mt 7, 21) concern every man: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." There must be performance; faith must be manifested by works.

If the great fire of divine love which he uses as his first argument will not draw us, then may the terrible threat of hell fire prove a sufficient incentive. In other words, if men follow not God, walking in love and showing their faith by their deeds, let them know they are not God's children, not heirs in his kingdom, and therefore are unquestionably heirs of the evil one in hell. He who is unmoved by the threats of hell fire must truly be a stick or a stone; indeed, he must have a heart like an anvil, as Job says.

Wow, some rather pointed words! Words given to those who *are saints*, that is those who are already holy, made so because they have been made so by Christ. So God informs us in this text, “Dear children of light, walk as children of light. The fruit of light is found in all that is good, and right, and true.” And if we were left only with those exhortations, we might become a little despondent, “Wow, I have not done that, in fact, I have failed miserably.” Or we might look at other people, including some who are members of our congregation, and think, I’m doing pretty good in comparison.

The problem begins when we think that this is just rhetoric, just words written to exhort us to certain behavior. Today’s society has taught us that this is not what God will do. God will not respond in this way.

Dear friends, that is exactly how God will respond. These are exactly God’s Word to us through the pen of Paul. God’s wrath will come down upon the sons of disobedience. It is for this reason that saints, children of the light, do not associate with them. We might follow in their footsteps and then fall under God’s wrath.

We are to walk as children of light. We are to walk as those who have been enlightened by God’s grace, enlightened in both mind and heart.

You know the light of God’s grace. You came to God’s grace earlier, bowed low in repentance. You can to God’s grace to be enlightened with a word from God, a word of forgiveness. It was the absolution that cut through the darkness of your sin and enlightened you with peace.

Dear friends, you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

Walk as children of light – walk in what is good. It is good for you to have sins forgiven, to be released from fear of God. Walk in that Word of God’s forgiveness, which gives you all the goodness of God.

Walk as children of light – walk in what is right. Dear friends, upon the cross Christ gave His life unto death to make you right with God. His righteousness is like a garment you may wear, His robe of righteousness, given to you in your baptism, is weekly laundered in Word and Sacrament. Christ’s righteousness covers you and makes you right before God.

Walk as children of light – walk in what is true. It is true that you eat of Christ’s flesh and drink of His holy precious blood. Christ is the truth that fills you with himself, freeing you from sin and death.

Walk as children of light. Walk as those redeemed by Christ. Walk in all that is good and right and true. Amen.