

Some people like to have it completely pitch black when they sleep. But you can imagine what happens when you fall asleep without closing the blinds. You're out cold and then all of a sudden, WHAM! The 6 AM sunlight hits your face. What are your options at that point? What are you going to do now? You could either stumble across the room, grumble at the sun, close the curtains and go back to sleep, OR you could get a move on with your day, thankful for another day in the light. The light of the gospel has broken through the darkness and is shining directly into our hearts through faith. What do we do now that the light is shining on us? Do we live and walk as children of light, or do we try to ignore the light? And when it comes to unbelievers living in darkness, do we let our light shine on them, or are we content to leave them in darkness? In this text, Paul encourages us to recognize our status as children of light. God wants us to let our light shine out into the darkness instead of blending in, so that we can wake up those who are still sleeping in darkness by shining Christ's light on them.

**Living as children of light,
we can examine the light in our own lives,
and expose the darkness in the lives of others.**

Much of the letter to the Ephesians is about what a sanctified Christian life is like, now that we are in the light. The Christian life is one of unity. That truth was essential for the Jews and Gentiles in the Ephesian congregation, as it was revealed through Christ that salvation has been brought not just to the Jews but to the whole world. The wall of hostility has been torn down and now they are bricks being closely built together into one church. How true that is for us also, as we share and enjoy fellowship with each other in this new life of light. The Christian life is also brought about completely by God's grace. There is nothing that we did that brought us into faith, but purely a gift from God. Finally, the Christian life is not lived in darkness, but in light. Our new self puts aside the life that our old self longs for. The old self wants to roll around in the mud, taking pleasure in selfishly held grudges, crude and unwholesome language, sexual immorality. But since we were made alive in Christ, our new life is completely different. In faith, we are being restored in the image of God, made to be like him in true righteousness and holiness.

Paul explains that life without Christ is nothing but darkness. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God way back in the garden of Eden, sin crowded out the pure light that God had established in the perfect world he had created. Ever since sin entered the equation, life has been full of darkness. That's what it was like for the Ephesians without Christ, and that's what it's like for all of us by nature. Sin affects each and every one of us from the beginning, at the moment we are conceived. King David recognized the state of total depravity we were in when he confessed, "Surely I was sinful from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." The original sin that we inherited from our parents, going back generation to generation all the way to the beginning, condemns us from the start. Where there is sin, there is darkness.

But Jesus is the light that breaks the darkness. Isaiah prophesies about this light, saying, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." During his ministry here on earth, Jesus brought physical sight to a man born blind by performing an awesome miracle. But he was set out to do a lot more than just that. He says, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." His sacrifice on the cross brought spiritual light to those living in spiritual darkness. Through faith, his people enjoy life in the light. We now bear the status of children of light because of Christ.

Notice the complete change in status in this transition from death to life. Paul explains, "You were darkness, but now you are light." We as Christians are not just in the light temporarily, or can be light if we try really hard. We are light. Everything Christ has done has been transferred to our account, so that when God looks at us, he sees what Christ has done. Since Christ is the light of the world, we are also light through faith in him. The Christian's status has been completely changed and now we are given a new identity in life.

But there are times when we fail to acknowledge our new status as light. Take the children's song "This Little Gospel Light of Mine" as an example. It gives us a lot of truth, when it comes to how we live. One of the verses in that song is: "This little gospel light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine! Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine." We can't keep our faith to ourselves and bring it out only when it seems convenient. (1) When our faith is under attack in headlines and political movements, (2) when you're

out in the dating world looking for a future spouse, (3) when your peers pressure you to do something you know is contrary to God's will for you, do you still want to let your light shine? We may not always want to let our light shine, but there is a purpose in doing so. Jesus tells us, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven." We serve as lamp posts in a world of darkness, calling other people to the light of Christ. That light isn't something to hide, but to embrace as something that makes you unique! When we examine the light in our lives, we see that we have a new identity and purpose in Christ.

What are we going to do now that we are children of light? Paul tells us to examine what pleases the Lord. God makes it clear in his word that there are things that please him and things that displease him. He makes his will for us known in the law. You may remember from Catechism class that the law functions in three ways: as a mirror to show us our sins, a curb to steer us away from sin, and, specifically for believers, as a guide for Christian living. In this new life as forgiven children of light, we don't throw the ten commandments away and forget about them. We see the law in a whole new light, as a guide to get us through life. The law no longer is a burden to us, but a joy! We trust God's intentions for us and know that he has set these guidelines in place for a reason. As children of light, we have identity, purpose, and direction.

But, sadly, there are still people living in the darkness, who will face an eternity in hell if they do not wake up. John writes in his gospel, "Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." Our goal is to expose them to the light of Christ so that they may see the error of their ways and that the Holy Spirit may bring them to the light as he has done with us.

Equipped with the tools of the gospel and courage from the Holy Spirit, we can expose the darkness in three ways. First, you can serve by example. I think this is especially important in the times we're living in right now. With both a pandemic and political/civil unrest, people look to you to see how you react. You can serve as a powerful testimony of God's care, concern, and love for all people. Secondly, you can expose the darkness by your testimony in society. That means standing up and speaking out when we know something goes against God's Word. That means having tough conversations with people who are indifferent or even opposed to Christianity, by gently and patiently speaking the truth in love to them.

Finally, you can expose the darkness with your testimony to your family and friends. It may be incredibly difficult to talk about sin with the people closest to you, because obviously you value your relationship with them more than anyone else. But it may mean the most coming from someone they love and trust. God equips us with courage and his word to have these tough conversations for the sake of exposing the darkness.

In witnessing to the light, we never want to give off the impression that we are better than anyone else, because if not by the grace of God, we know that we would be right there with them. Our only goal in exposing the dark is to point people away from sin and towards Jesus. Christ is the only source of light in this world. He is the only way that those who are sleeping in darkness can wake up. With God's law and gospel as our tools, we can say to those living in the darkness around us, "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Morning has come, and Christ's light has broken through the darkness. Rise and shine! It's time to shake those around us out of their deep, dark sleep, and live our life in the light. Amen.