

From Darkness to Light

Ephesians 5:8-14

For at one time you were darkness, but now 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), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Manuelo was a young man who lives in a remote mountain village. You could reach that village only after hiking on a narrow footpath for several hours. It was a place where the homes and customs had not changed for hundreds of years. But Manuelo was lucky. He had a chance to visit a big, modern city. And everything he saw was wonderful! He wanted to bring some of that wonder back to his village, something that could surprise and delight his hillside neighbors. What should it be? It would have to be small and easy to carry, and it would have to be cheap, because Manuelo didn't have much money. So which in the big city, he went into a hardware store and bought a paper sack full of electric light bulbs. And he bought the sockets for those bulbs, with switches on them so he could turn the individual lights off and on. And he bought wires to hang everything up in the tress of his home village.

Then Manuel happily traveled back to his home in the mountains, bursting with his happy surprise. That same afternoon he began putting his surprise together. Everyone asked him what he was doing, hanging round glass bulbs from the ceiling of his porch, and from the fruit trees in his yard and into his neighbor's yards. But he just smiled at their questions and said mysteriously, “Wait until dark – you'll see!” Finally, when it was dark enough, Manuelo began to turn the switches for his lights. Nothing happened. Poor Manuelo! Nobody had told him about electricity. He didn't understand that the

light bulbs are useless glass and wire unless they are connected to a source of electric power.

And that's how it is with us. If we are to be light in the world, we'll have to hook up to the power source – Jesus Christ, the light of the world. And that connection with Christ is what we call faith. In this Scripture lesson, Paul is speaking to people like us when he said: Once you were in darkness, but now you are the light in the Lord; walk as children of light.” He is telling us that through faith in Christ we are moving from darkness to light. He is talking about our journey from darkness to light.

On this journey from darkness to light, there's danger – the danger of being found out, the danger of getting the skeletons in our closet exposed, the danger that we'll be see as we really are, the danger that the wrong and nasty things in our lives may be revealed. At the very least, this could be embarrassing. It the most, it could be incriminating.

Remember, for example, those who steal government secrets, thinking they will never be found out. Remember the terrorists who may calculate that they will never be discovered because of their complicated schemes. The way these crimes and many other are stopped and brought to justice is by bringing them into the light.

And that's the danger for us, too, as we daily move from darkness to light. We just may not come out of it looking clean and smelling sweet. In our personal lives and attitudes, we must expose to the light what's dark and bad, what's harmful and hateful.

But this is the risk we take on this journey from darkness to light, when we realize that we are now light in the Lord, and we start walking as children of light. We take off our masks, we have to open ourselves up to one another, and we have to start confessing our faults and sins to one another. There's no sense for me to pretend to be something or somebody I'm really not.

The people of Alcoholics Anonymous have discovered something of this walking in the light, and the risk of it, and they have willingly taken that risk. At their meetings, anyone who gets up to speak

always begins by saying: “My name is Chris (or whatever) and I am an alcoholic.” They start by exposing themselves to the light of truth and honesty. They make a confessions of their helplessness to overcome alcoholism by themselves. As we see them and hear them going through a difficult process, we are reminded of the Christian process of conversion and repentance. We are confessing to our Lord that we are helpless in our darkness. We need the power of God’s Holy Spirit that comes to us through faith, and the relationship that it brings with Jesus Christ.

But when we finally open ourselves to the dangers and risks of exposure, when we take this journey from darkness to light, real growth is possible. That’s when we finally begin to SEE, and you’ve got to have the lights on for that. You know what I mean if you have ever tried to find your way through an unfamiliar place in pitch blackness. You hit you head, you stumble and crash. Everything seems to working against you. The only way to correct the situation is to turn on the light. Then you can make progress through the room.

So when we walk in the light of Jesus, he can bring correction, healing, and growth into our lives. When the light of Christ shows us a wrong direction in our lives, we can turn and change and grow, following Christ and imitating him.

We can even learn from the plants. They turn their leaves toward the window, toward the light. If you turn them away, they will slowly and gradually turn their leaves back to the light. That’s where their life comes from. As we walk in the light, the lifestyle of Christ can become more and more our lifestyle.

This scripture was addressed especially to newly baptized Christians, people who had only recently started the journey from darkness into light. Paul wants them to be aware of the danger and the risks, as well as the growth opportunities that will be in store for them.

Pastors and workers in mission field understand Paul’s point very well. Those who embrace Jesus and begin to walk in the Light of Christ can risk being disowned by parents and friends. They risk alienating friends and co-workers. But they also understand the joy and the

blessing of knowing Jesus, with the promise and the life that He brings. Christianity is the religion of grace, the message that the same Jesus Christ who is Lord is also the one who forgives. He doesn’t hold your past against you, no matter how dark it once was.

I love the clever slogan used by the business that sells and installs window coverings. The sign on their vehicles says: A blind man is driving this truck. It’s true in the business sense, but for all too many people, it describes their spiritual situation – they are blind, and will remain that way, until they come to know Jesus as their Savior and their Light.

Walking as children of light is a life-long journey. It doesn’t happen overnight. And if your eyes are open, you will see others who have discovered the Lord of Life and Light, walking together with you, loving and supporting you on the path of the way, the truth, and the life.

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