

<sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light— <sup>9</sup> for the fruit of the light<sup>cl</sup> consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth— <sup>10</sup> testing what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Don't participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to mention what is done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup> Everything exposed by the light is made visible, <sup>14</sup> for what makes everything visible is light. Therefore it is said:

Get up, sleeper, and rise up from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.

## Wake Up

Do you have a hard time staying awake? I know I do. I was falling asleep in choir last Thursday. I blame the allergy medicine not the director. But even as a child I had a habit of falling asleep under my father's arm. He was larger at the time and thus made a more comfortable pillow than my mother. It was during these formative years that I slept through sermons on a regular basis (it didn't help that they dimmed the lights) and thus began the struggle that I would face throughout the rest of my growing years. I was a constant sermon sleeper. I struggled to stay awake. I had conditioned myself to jump up upon hearing the closing, "Amen." A close friend popped no doze and that still didn't work. It wasn't just me, my Uncle admitted the reason he became a pastor was so I could stay awake during the sermon." So here I am. Awake. Hopefully healthy.

And hearing Paul quote what appears to be a popular hymn, "*Wake up sleeper, rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.*" But it's rather interesting that Paul would call someone who is dead to wake up. It doesn't sound possible. We have the expression, "That's loud enough to wake the dead," but it's never been done. It doesn't matter if you rip the blankets off, sound the air horn, and throw a bucket of water or or if you open the blinds and play music at a faint whisper. It won't work. So how could the dead wake up?

You know because you've been there, dead. Paul started Ephesians chapter 2 with, "*As for you, you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you used to walk when you conformed to the ways of this world.*" You were asleep but something changed when Jesus woke you up. Knowing Jesus is transformative. It changes our worldview, your outlook, your words and actions. We aren't hear for panic but for peace and I won't condemn those who are worried, I won't even criticize those who are bulking up on toilet paper (although I will mock them) what we really need is the peace of Christ and the light he brings as we wake up to the reality of the world around us.

Paul got woke. No he didn't become some SJW. No, he started out as an intolerant bigot who went around looking for Christians to round up and put to sleep. He stood by and watched as Stephen was murdered for his beliefs. He held the coats of these killers while they went to work on him. Paul's world was dark. And as he was on his way to round up more who confessed Christ – a bright light woke him up. One who once was dedicated to the eradication of Christianity was now its

foremost Evangelist. He traveled all over the Mediterranean, run out of one city after another. Finally he happened upon Ephesus.

Ephesus was a major city. It was one of the most important cities at that time, a rival to Rome. It was located on a trade route, a port for ships going up river and those going out to sea. Ephesus was also an important religious site. The temple of Artemis goddess of the Ephesians, one of the 7 wonders of the world was there and so were the silversmiths who made a living on idols. It didn't take long before Paul was run out of Ephesus. But then it seems all got quiet. This letter doesn't address any specific issues. There don't seem to be any emergencies. It's not like he's writing to the Corinthian congregation. All seems well. Life has settled down. And yet they are danger of being lulled to sleep by the quiet world around them.

Paul's letter is packed with encouragement and reminders of who they are in Christ. But our lessons starts with who we were, "Darkness." But now you are light. His encouragement is to continue as children of light—<sup>9</sup> *for the fruit of the light<sup>[9]</sup> consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth—*<sup>10</sup> *testing what is pleasing to the Lord.* Light and dark are more than mere metaphors for bad and good behavior. They are two different kingdoms that are in spiritual warfare with one another. You are one or the other. You are either a child of darkness or a child of light. And if you are a child of light then Paul also says, "You can't pick and choose what kind of Christian you will be. You can't pick fruits." There is only one "Fruit" singular. The fruit of the Spirit or the fruit of the light is singular. It includes all of these aspects, Goodness, righteousness, truth, and testing. A Christian will not want to displease the LORD. Instead they will go about waking up one another with the Word of God, exposing the darkness, not participating in it.

You've been brought into the light, made children of the light. Jesus woke you up with water and the word, he has worked through his word to bring you to life. And now we face the same dangers as the Ephesians. When everything is going well, we tend to get tired. When there are no problems in the world, it's easy to sleep. When there is conflict, family tensions, the mind races and it's not so easy to sleep. But then problems are brought into the light and life isn't so comfortable. We suddenly realize we aren't as in control of life as we like to imagine.

Then problems come and then denial, after accepting this we look to place blame. Whose fault is it? Why is this happening? We may examine our lives for evidence that we are children of light. The soul search begins and so does the search for faith. But that's like finding something smaller than a mustard seed. You can't see it and yet it exists. And yet some will go in search of evidence by examining their life for goodness, righteousness, and truth. What is usually found is what you don't want to see or be reminded of. The devil throws the things you've done, the things you're ashamed of, the times you have not lived as a child of the light but rather the things you've done in darkness behind the dim glow of a computer screen. Sometimes people mock children for being afraid of the dark when it's the adults who are afraid of the light. They're afraid of their works being exposed because it's shameful.

That isn't the only evidence we'll find. Our deeds of darkness extend to the panic shopping which points to our hope and trust. We forget about the whole, "*I believe that God created me and all that exists – that he richly and daily provides all that I need for this body and life.*" And the panic is part of our struggle to control the world that is out of control. The sad part is that we think, "If I only have this... I'll be safe," And so the pilgrimage to the temples of consumerism begin. And in the end all our careful preparations and work, planning only leave us holding on to a 48 pack of toilet paper. It may be big, soft, and squishy – but you can't eat it and it cannot save you. It's not just the misplaced trust, it's also the things we say, think or do.

All of this may cause you to question Jesus, "I'm a child of the light? If so, then why do I struggle? Why am I pulled back into the darkness? Am I saved?" Paul doesn't lead us into doubt. He wants the Ephesians and us certain about who we are and who we were. We were darkness. Everything we did was dark. It was our nature. But that is now who we are now. You are children of the light.

Everything has changed. Once upon a time you were unaware of your sin. Once upon a time you were oblivious. But now, you can see your sin, you know you sin, and you can also see your Savior and you know what it means to live a God pleasing life. God "*has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*" (Colossians 1:13, 14). We are Children of the light; we are that because we have been made so by Jesus.

The devil wants you to walk in darkness and to embrace what you once were, just like he was tempting the Ephesians to do. Jesus enables you through the power of the Holy Spirit working through his word to walk in light. And you don't walk alone. He walks with you. He walks with you because he is the goodness, righteousness, and truth that Paul talks about. He then tells us what he has done in his Word.

He points out our need for a Savior. The law shows our sin and our need for a savior. And then he tells us about that Savior and what he has done to secure our salvation. He tells us again and again of his great love for us. His love was so great that on a dark hill outside of Jerusalem, the light of the world would endure the pain and suffering, the punishment and condemnation that our darkness deserved. All the darkness gathered together in one dark spot as it was placed on Jesus at the cross and later left in the grave. There the light of the world was extinguished.

Dear friends, as the days grow longer and full of light, it's about to get dark. We're headed toward Good Friday and there we see what he endured to bring us life. On that dark day we see light. When all hope was gone and it looked like the darkness had won, our Savior rose to life three days later. This shows us that the Son rises even after the darkest night.

That light transforms us. Through the Work of the Holy Spirit in Word and water, bread and wine – he enables us to push off the darkness and see him more clearly. He defeats our evil desires and brings us into the light. We were blind but now we see. Every day we wake up we remember that.

Every new day the Light of Jesus shines on us. And that light shines through us to a very dark world. We no longer embrace the dark, but we expose it for what it really is.

We'll speak out against the atrocities of humanity: organ harvesting, abortion, and sex trafficking. God holds human life as sacred. It isn't trivial or something to be snuffed out. We'll expose evil for what it is, and show the damage done to children and future generations. We'll live as children of the light – so that the light of Christ can be seen. In so doing we encourage other Christians in their struggle and put to shame the world around.

For some it will be a rude awakening as their shame is put on display for all to see, for others it will be peaceful as they hear how their Savior has taken away their guilt and shame. But either way Paul still calls us to wake up o sleeper rise from the dead. But it's a command that is empowered by the promise, "*The Christ will shine on you.*" He has and will continue shine upon us. Amen.