Opening Words

God is calling people out of spiritual sleep into spiritual alertness, out of spiritual death into spiritual life, out of spiritual darkness into spiritual light.

177 Eph Live Obediently Because of Who You Are

In our previous broadcast, we had some sobering words. The wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience. Those who practice immorality, impurity, who are always desiring more and never being satisfied, these idolaters will be excluded from the kingdom of God and will instead experience the wrath of God. Thus, Paul gives us the strong command, "Do not partake with them in these things. Don't go on a sinning binge with the world" because that would be like someone offering you a seat on the Titanic – on the top deck – with a beautiful view of everything. The Titanic went down, and this world is going down as well. 1 John 2:17 says "the world is passing away and its lusts." So, don't participate with them in this behavior.

Paul gives a second motivation for holy living. He refocuses us on who we are in Christ and in verses 8-14 he uses the theme of light to describe our identity. In 4:17-19 he used darkness to describe the pagan world. Now he uses light to describe the world in Christ. Listen to his words in 5:8-14:

> for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of
> Light [9] (for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), [10] trying to
> learn what is pleasing to the Lord. [11] Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but
> instead even expose them; [12] for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by
> them in secret.[13] But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything
> that becomes visible is light. [14] For this reason it says,
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> "Awake, sleeper,
> And arise from the dead,
> And Christ will shine on you."

Notice that Paul does not say, "you were **in** the darkness." That would have been a true statement, and if he had said that he would have been talking about the environment of sin. But Paul says, "you **were** darkness." It is not just how you behaved. It was what you were. That was your status. You stood before the Lord of light in whose presence only light can exist and you were a person of darkness – darkness of mind, darkness of heart, darkness of will.

But now he says, you are light. He does not just say you are "in the light," which is also a true statement, but he says you are now a person of light. This is your new status by your union with Christ Jesus. Your mind and heart have been enlightened and you are now learning to walk in this new status before the Lord of light. This is why Paul says, in the very next breath, "walk as children of light."

Figure out who you are in Christ and live according to that identity is another way of putting it. I remember when I was a little boy and was very sick physically and with some emotional problems

as well. I was eleven and was in miserable shape. My brother was home on leave from the Navy and he got alone with me to motivate me and said, "Jonathan, remember you are a Williams and the Williamses don't behave like this." Then he caught himself and said, "First, remember that you are a Christian and that you also are a Texan." I never forgot those words and that exhortation. He appealed to my identity – my family name, my state of birth, and above all my Christian identity.

Paul is doing the same in this passage and using it to motivate us further to a holy life. You were darkness before God. Now you are light before God. Live out this identity.

Paul, then gives us three markers for living as a person of light. He tells us in verse 9 that the fruit of the Light is goodness, righteousness, and truth. Look at your life – do you spread goodness to others? Look at your life – are you increasing in righteous behavior? Look at your life – are you devoted to truth? Let these three kinds of fruit from the light characterize your life. This reminds me of Philippians 4:8-9 where Paul said: "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

With these three markers as our guide, we can come into every situation and test it. This is what Paul has in mind in verse 10 when he tells us to try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. The Greek text uses the word, *dokimazo*, which means to test and prove something, like an assayer of precious metals and gems who looks very closely at items to determine their worth. If you have doubts about what to do, use these three qualities as a guide to test or prove if it is something you should do. Does the situation promote goodness to all? Is the situation righteous? Does the situation promote the truth of God's word or a lie? Use these markers to evaluate and test everything. Then make the good, righteous, and truthful choice.

Paul then repeats something he said earlier. In verse 7 he told us not to partake of sinful practices with others. In verse 11 he says, "do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness but instead expose them." How do we expose deeds of darkness? We do it by our character. When someone says, "Hey why don't you go with me to this place," and you know it is not a moral place, and when you refuse, you immediately expose their request as darkness. When someone says, "why don't you let me do this for you," and you know it is cheating or unethical and you refuse, you are exposing their suggestions as darkness.

Once, I had my car in a repair shop and I had to wait a couple of hours before it was finished. I was sitting in the lobby working on my Sunday sermon and the manager said, "Why don't you go up to the break area for our employees. You can set out your books and be a lot more comfortable." I thanked the manager and went upstairs, set everything down and then started to work. I was a few minutes into it when I looked up and noticed some pictures on the wall, pictures of beautiful women with hardly anything on at all. I looked and looked again and thought, "I have to stop looking at these. Here I am trying to write a sermon with these pictures right in front of me." I thought about my two young sons and asked myself, "What would happen if I caught them sitting in a place like this. I would want them out."

Well, I knew what I had to do. I got my stuff and went back downstairs, and in my uncomfortable chair continued working. The manager saw me and kindly said, "What happened? Didn't you like the area up there?" And I explained to him who I was, a Christian and a pastor, and what I was doing, preparing a sermon and there was no way I could sit up there. I don't know what he did. But I had to live as a child of light, and when I did I exposed darkness in that workplace.

Brothers and sisters, this is not a popular thing to do – to expose the darkness. Sometimes people get angry with us because they don't want to be exposed. They think we are judgmental when we are not. They think we are condemning them when we are not. We, sometimes, are just trying to walk in the light because we are children of light but when we walk in the light, we expose the darkness. We expose their behavior which Paul tells us in verse 13 that they do in secret. They do things in secret, in the dark, because they know, instinctively, that they are wrong, but they don't want to give them up so they keep them in the back rooms away from most people.

But know this! There is hope for these people. Paul says in verse 13 that "all things become visible when they are exposed by the light and that they become light." Paul is adding an evangelistic element to this battle between light and darkness. Sometimes, people's dark deeds are exposed and changed by the light. The light not only shines upon them and tells them that what they are doing is a disgrace to the Creator, but the light has a way of changing people and turning them from creatures of darkness into creatures of light.

Isn't that what happened to us? The only hope for people is for the light to shine upon them! Paul tells us in verse 14, "for this reason it says, 'Awake sleeper and arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.'"

Commentators are not exactly sure who Paul is quoting here. Some have believed that he is quoting from Isaiah 60:1 which says, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you." Others believe he is quoting from an early Christian hymn or baptismal formula.

Either way, the effect is the same, God is calling people out of spiritual sleep into spiritual alertness, out of spiritual death into spiritual life, out of spiritual darkness into spiritual light. Sleep, death, darkness, are all appropriate metaphors for the lostness of people and the lostness of civilizations, indeed, the lostness of the world. Wakefulness, life, light, are all appropriate metaphors for the children of God and for the kingdom of God into which he calls all men. He wants to shine upon people. He wants to shine upon you right now. He wants to awaken you right now. He wants to give you life right now.

Will you let him do this for you? Will you walk away from spiritual slumber? Will you walk away from spiritual death? Will you walk away from spiritual darkness and let Christ turn you into a man or woman of light?

Pray with me right now.

"Father in heaven. I want this. I want you to change me. I want to be a person of light. I have lived in the darkness for too long. I have been spiritually asleep for too long. I have been living in the realm

of death. Forgive me. Come into my life. Make me new. Enlighten me. Show me your way, and I will be forever grateful for your grace and will serve you."

Did you pray that? We hope you did, and for those listening who already know Christ, I urge you to walk in a consistent way that you might expose the darkness and turn the darkness into light for others.