

THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

(LESSON EIGHTY-SEVEN)

“AWAKE AND ARISE”

EPHESIANS 5:8-14

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.

9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

The following excerpt from a **Devotional** published by **Ligonier Ministries**, will help to set the stage for our reflections this evening:

“Continuing his exposition of our need to walk in the light of Christ and please God, Paul...makes it plain that living apart from the darkness

does not mean withdrawing completely from the world. Instead, walking as children of the light means not engaging in the sins of the unbelieving culture even as we love the sinners around us (**Ephesians 5:11**). When it comes to interacting with the world, we are not forbidden from making friends with those who are still enslaved to sin; rather, we are forbidden from acting in ways that displease God.

Interestingly, Paul explains that we are not to take merely a **defensive** stance against dark deeds and stay away from them. Our approach must be **offensive** — we are to 'expose' unfruitful works of darkness. The interplay in the immediate context between light and darkness, helps us understand how this exposure happens (verses **7-14**). That which is hidden in the darkness can be revealed only when light shines on it, and by walking in Christ we shine the light of holiness on the dark recesses of this world. Our efforts to live sanctified lives stand in stark contrast to the evil of our fallen culture, thereby exposing sinners for who they truly are and unveiling what they truly deserve — the wrath of God. Our preaching of the gospel goes hand in hand with such living so that those whose deeds are exposed might know that they will escape the darkness if they come to Jesus.

Only two responses can follow such exposure. Many will hate the light and those whose lives provide the illumination, and they will try to stamp out the light and silence the church (**John 3:19-20; Acts 14:8-23; Acts 19:21-41**). Others will feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit and see the darkness of their deeds. They will turn from their sin to Christ and thereby begin to glorify the Lord (**Matthew 5:14-16**). The light of God that shines through us, both illumines and transforms, exposes and cleanses. Those whom the light redeems become visible, and that which is visible is light (**Ephesians 5:13-14**). In other words, formerly dark individuals are cleansed and become lights through whom our Savior shines brightly. This is what happened at our conversion, and

we continue to become ever brighter lights as we, through confession and repentance, expose our sin to God and flee from it."

In **Ephesians** chapter **5** and verse **13**, Paul writes, "*But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.*"

The **New English Translation** renders the verse as follows: "*But all things being exposed by the light are made visible.*"

As we explained last week, the word "*reprov'd*" or "*exposed*," is a translation of the Greek word **elegchó**: (**el-eng'-kho**), which means, "to reprove or rebuke so as to bring about conviction or confession of guilt." The idea is to rebuke another in such a way that they are compelled to see and admit the error of their ways. **Elegchó** was used in the Greek law courts, not merely of a reply to an opposing attorney, but of a refutation of his argument.

The phrase, "*made manifest*" or "*made visible*," is a translation of the Greek word **phaneroó**: (**fan-er-o'-o**), which means, "to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown, to manifest, whether by words, or deeds, or in any other way." **Phaneroó** speaks of an external manifestation to the senses and thus, a manifestation that is open to all. In the Scriptural sense, the word means more than simply to appear. It is possible for a person to appear in a false likeness of who and what he or she truly is. But to be manifested is to be revealed in one's true character. The idea is that when light shines on anything or anyone, then people can know what that thing or person really is.

The Greek word translated "*light*" is **phós**: (**foce**), which can refer to literal light, but is used here to refer to the **spiritual** light in the believer. Light makes manifest or reveals whatever is in the darkness. So when believers "*walk as children of light*," they reprove or expose the darkness of those who are still dead in their trespasses and sins. In verse **13**, Paul is teaching us how to effectively deal with sin. We deal with sin

effectively by exposing all of our thoughts, utterances and actions to the light of the Word of God. “*What does the Scripture say*” (**Romans 4:3**), is the question that we must always ask.

John MacArthur said, “Our commission as children of light is to hold everything up to the light of Scripture, to expose and seek to remedy whatever is evil. Because they have no windows and are built side-by-side on narrow streets, most shops in Middle Eastern cities are quite dark inside. To get a good look at what he is buying a customer must take the merchandise out into the sunshine. In that bright light the article can be seen for what it really is, and any flaws and imperfections will be obvious.”

In **John 3:19-21**, our Lord uttered some very solemn words, words which every individual, both saved and unsaved need to consider very carefully. The **New English Translation** renders the passage as follows:

19 Now this is the basis for judging: that the light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.

20 For everyone who does evil deeds hates the light and does not come to the light, so that their deeds will not be exposed.

21 But the one who practices the truth comes to the light, so that it may be plainly evident that his deeds have been done in God.

The “*judgement*” referred to in verse **19**, is based on the fact that God’s light came into the world in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ and His Gospel of salvation. The phrase “*Has come*” is in the **perfect** tense in the Greek which speaks of the permanence or abiding effect of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world.

Jesus Christ, the very embodiment of the truth and love of God, came into the realm of fallen mankind; but the vast majority of persons

preferred the moral and spiritual darkness of sin. In fact, they actually loved the darkness. And the reason was not that they were ignorant, but that their deeds were evil.

Regarding this, **Charles Spurgeon** wrote the following:

"The dislike of Christ is caused by a love of sin. If men did not hug their sins, they would embrace the Saviour. You see why men do **not** come to Christ; they do not want to give up their sin; they do not want to be made uneasy in it; they are afraid of being reproved. You see why saintly men **do** come to Christ, for they take a delight in beholding him, and in having their faith and their grace made manifest, both to themselves and to onlookers....**Those who love their sins cannot at the same time love the Saviour**; they must love the one, and hate the other; and it is a terrible choice when they deliberately reject the only Saviour; 'the Light of the world,' and choose the darkness of sin, the darkness of woe, the outer darkness, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

Our Lord says, "*People loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.*" Unbelievers are not ignorant, but they willfully reject the Light. They "*loved the darkness.*" In other words, they actively, willfully rejected the light and cleaved to the darkness!

The Greek philosopher **Plato**, made the following observation: "We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the **dark**. The real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the **light**."

The awful reality is that men and women do not believe in Christ because they love their sin. They therefore do not want Him to shine a light on their sin and expose them for who and what they really are. They prefer moral darkness to light.

D. A. Carson explains that, "Jesus is the revelation of God and the objectification of divine holiness and purity. But men loved darkness

instead of light: they preferred to live without such knowledge of God, without such brilliant purity. The reason was fundamentally moral: their deeds were evil. They were not willing to live by the truth; **they valued their pride more than their integrity, their prejudice more than contrite faith.** Worse, anyone in this camp hates the light and refuses to come to it for fear that his deeds will be exposed. The verb suggests not only exposure but shame and conviction."

In verse **21** Jesus contrasts the believer with the unbeliever. He says, *"But the one who practices the truth comes to the light, so that it may be plainly evident that his deeds have been done in God."*

Our Lord says, that the one who **practices** the truth comes to the light. The word "*practices*" is in the **present** tense in the Greek, which indicates that these individuals consistently live this way. Brothers and sisters, Jesus is not describing **perfection**. He is emphasizing **direction**. Believers are certainly not perfect, but their faces are always pointed in the direction of the light rather than toward the darkness!

Regarding the statement, "*for whatsoever doth make manifest is light,*" The Greek New Testament Scholar **Marvin Vincent made the following** comments: "Whatever is revealed in its true essence by light is of the nature of light. It no longer belongs to the category of darkness. Manifestation is a law of good and evil alike. That which is of the truth seeks the light and cometh to the light. That which is evil avoids the light and loves darkness better than light, but none the less is brought to the light and appears in its own light."

It has been observed that Molds and fungi grow best in darkness. Light retards decay because it exposes darkness. Spirit filled believers are light in the Lord, and the world desperately needs to see that light.

In **John 16:7-11** our Lord said the following to His disciples:

7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I am going away. For if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you.

8 And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong concerning sin and righteousness and judgment—

9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;

10 concerning righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer;

11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

Brothers and sisters, it is the Holy Spirit who proves the world wrong, or reproves, or convicts the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. The Greek word translated “*prove*” in verse **8** is **elegchó:** (**el-eng’-kho**), the same word translated “*reproved*” or “*exposed*” in **Ephesians 5:13**.

John Phillips, in his commentary on **Ephesians**, writes the following: “Most of us have at one time or another turned over a stone or a log and recoiled at the ugly creatures that make darkness their home and scurry away in terror when exposed to the light. It is a terrible fact that we all harbor sins in the dark recesses of our souls. They live and flourish there, multiplying and revelling in being unseen. But once we let the light shine in, once we let the Holy Spirit do His convicting work in our hearts, the hidden works of darkness will be exposed...Only the Holy Spirit can expose our sins to the light. When He does, we can see them for what they are-ugly beyond words.”

In verse **14** Paul writes, “*Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*” As is the case

with verse **12**, this verse is not the easiest to understand and interpret. The introductory formula, “*Wherefore he saith,*” seems to indicate that Paul is quoting from an Old Testament passage, but it is difficult to identify exactly which passage. The one that that comes closest to the words quoted by Paul, is **Isaiah 60:1-2**. The **New English Translation** renders the verse as follows:

1 “Arise! Shine! For your light arrives! The splendor of the LORD shines on you!

2 For, look, darkness covers the earth and deep darkness covers the nations, but the LORD shines on you; his splendor appears over you.

Perhaps, the quotation it is a combination of more than one passage. Many commentators interpret the words as a quotation from a non-biblical source, possibly a Christian hymn.

But there is another reason why this verse is difficult to understand and interpret. Is Paul in this verse, addressing believers or unbelievers? Some commentators believe that Paul is extending an invitation for salvation to the unsaved, in order that they may be transformed from children of darkness into children of light. Others, are of the opinion that Paul is addressing believers who need to be awakened from spiritual lethargy. There are even a few commentators who hold the view that the exhortation applies to both believers and unbelievers.

While I am of the view that the exhortation was primarily intended for the believers in Ephesus, I also believe that it is relevant for the unbeliever as well. I agree with the person who made the following statement: “*To raise difficulties is very easy, but meekly to try to learn what the Savior would say is far better.*”

The word “*awake*” is the translation of a Greek word which means, “to waken, rouse from sleep, from death or inactivity.” The word is in a construction in the Greek which indicate that those who are presently

asleep should awaken and remain in a state of alertness. They are to be continually awake!

Earlier, I expressed the view that the exhortation in this verse was primarily intended for believers. I am persuaded that the context supports such a view. In **Ephesians 4** and **5**, Paul has been speaking to primarily to the Gentile believers who had once walked in total darkness, being “*without the Messiah, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world*” (**Ephesians 2:12, New English Translation**).

The temptation for these Gentile believers to drift back into the darkness would be an ever present danger. In fact the negative commands in the present imperative, forbidding the continuance of actions already in progress which appear so frequently in these chapters, clearly indicate that some of them were involved, at least to some degree, in the “*unfruitful works of darkness.*” In that context, it would be reasonable for Paul to issue a call to them urging them to wake up.

It is also notable that Paul exhorts believers in a similar manner in other of his letters. We will consider 3 such exhortations all reflecting the rendering of the **New English Translation**:

Romans 12:11-14

*11 And do this because we know the time, that it is already the hour for us to **awake from sleep**, for our salvation is now nearer than when we became believers.*

12 The night has advanced toward dawn; the day is near. So then we must lay aside the works of darkness, and put on the weapons of light.

13 Let us live decently as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in discord and jealousy.

14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to arouse its desires.

1 Corinthians 15:34

33 Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'

34 Sober up as you should, and stop sinning! For some have no knowledge of God—I say this to your shame!

1 Thessalonians 5:5-8

5 For you all are sons of the light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness.

6 So then we must not sleep as the rest, but must stay alert and sober.

7 For those who sleep, sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

8 But since we are of the day, we must stay sober by putting on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet our hope for salvation.

The American theologian, **Samuel Lewis Johnson Jr.** was also of the view that **Ephesians 5:14** was addressed to believers. Commenting on the verse he wrote the following:

"This is a text taken from the Old Testament, but it is applied by the Apostle to the **believers**. He is telling them that if their lives are not characterized by this purity of which he is talking, they are sleeping morally, and they should awake, and they should arise from the dead and Christ will give them light... 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' It's a promise that as we, by the grace of God and the enablement of God, get down upon our knees and ask him to deliver us from the failures of our Christian life, well we have the assurance that God will undertake for us and we shall be given light."

In the same way that the Old Testament prophets often found it necessary to appeal to the nation of Israel to awaken from its state of darkness and death, so Paul found it necessary to appeal to the Ephesian believers to wake up, stay alert, and realize the dangerous condition into which some of them had been slipping by listening to false teachers. He urged those who were committing “*works of darkness,*” to wake up and rise from the dead since they were operating as though they were still in a spiritually dead condition. Paul gives the believers the guarantee that if they awake and arise from the dead, Christ will give them light!

Brothers and sisters, we have only **2** options. We can choose to follow Christ and walk in His light, or we can choose to refuse to follow Him and walk in darkness! If we choose to hear and obey the command to awake and arise from the dead, Christ will shine on us. We will be enabled by the Holy Spirit to live lives filled “*with all goodness, righteousness, and truth,*” the fruit of light, rather than the “*unfruitful works of darkness*”

Let us continually remind ourselves of the truth about ourselves recorded in verse **8**: “*for you were at one time darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.*” And since this is the truth concerning us, let us “*Live like children of light.*”

We will conclude this Lesson with the **Message**’s translation of **Ephesians 5:6-14**:

6 Don't let yourselves get taken in by religious smooth talk. God gets furious with people who are full of religious sales talk but want nothing to do with him.

7 Don't even hang around people like that.

8 You groped your way through that murk once, but no longer. You're out in the open now. The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around. Get on with it!

9 The good, the right, the true — these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours.

10 Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it.

11 Don't waste your time on useless work, mere busywork, the barren pursuits of darkness. Expose these things for the sham they are.

12 It's a scandal when people waste their lives on things they must do in the darkness where no one will see.

13 Rip the cover off those frauds and see how attractive they look in the light of Christ.

14 Wake up from your sleep, Climb out of your coffins; Christ will show you the light!