

The Apostle Paul has been sharing the difference between the old nature and the new life in Christ. He has listed for us a number of behaviors and attitudes, contrasting the ungodly and the godly. In verses one and two of the chapter he sums up the new life by saying we are to imitate God, which is to live like Jesus, laying down our lives in sacrificial service to God. Jesus is the example to which we are all to aim.

In our passage today he uses a metaphor that runs throughout Scripture, one that is found in many other religions as well. (Acts 26:18) It is the metaphor of light and dark. "Enlightened" is a popular word in our town. Let's look at how the Apostle used this metaphor and consider the implications.

⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light Notice that he doesn't say that you were *in* darkness, but that you were darkness. Very few religions hold to this Biblical truth. (Romans 5:12) Our culture really despises it. We were darkness because we inherited the selfish sinful nature of fallen Adam. Culture didn't corrupt us. We were already corrupt. Civilization did not ruin our pristinely white character; we created corrupt civilization. This is the starting point for understanding the Bible, the world, and your own heart for that matter. (Jeremiah 17:9) Man is fallen. Without Christ we ARE darkness!

I almost always get some flack when I preach this Biblical truth. Yet it is the most empirically verifiable reality for which we have numerous daily examples. I don't really need to defend it as the truth of it headlines our news every single day. And if you think you might be an exception, do this simple test. Say out loud everything that comes through your mind. You wouldn't dare. Now does the passage have your attention? (Isaiah 55:8)

You were darkness! (2:1-2) I would add that if you are here this morning and you have not accepted the work of Jesus to make you a child of light, you are darkness. The clear truth of this passage is inviting you to become a child of light. (John 12:35-36) It's not that Christians are perfect, or that we could say out loud everything that comes to our minds, but rather that we acknowledge our sin and asked for forgiveness. We are being transformed and have had a heart change. Our minds are being renewed by the work of God, and so the Apostle can tell the Ephesians and us *but now you are light in the Lord.*

That is why Jesus could say that He is the light of the world (John 8:12), and in another place say that you (the disciples) are the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14) He explained it this way. John 8:12b ^{12b} *Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but*

Commented [notes1]: Acts 26:18 (ESV)
¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Commented [notes2]: Romans 5:12 (ESV)
¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned -

Commented [notes3]: Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)
⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Commented [notes4]: Isaiah 55:8 (ESV)
⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

Commented [notes5]: Ephesians 2:1-2 (ESV)
¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins
² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

Commented [notes6]: John 12:35-36 (ESV)
³⁵ So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.
³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

Commented [notes7]: John 8:12 (ESV)
¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Commented [notes8]: Matthew 5:14 (ESV)
¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

will have the light of life." Jesus alone could make that claim. We have the light of Jesus when we become a Christ follower. We are light *in* the Lord.

Paul is saying that because you are light, walk, or live, as children of the light. If you are in Christ you are in Light. Jesus said if you are following Him, you will not walk in darkness. Can you be a child of the light and walk in darkness? Jesus said you can't if you are closely following Him. But if Paul had to remind the children of light to walk in the light, then you must be able to be a child of the light and yet not follow Jesus. In other words, you've been adopted into the family of God, and yet you don't act like it. There's a word for that, hypocrite. We've all been there.

Can we express what Paul is saying as "Don't be a hypocrite"? You are light, so act like it. (1Thessalonians 5:5) Live in the light. Don't fall back into the old patterns. You know the difference, so live as children Light. **Don't confuse people by acting like the world in selfishness and indifference.** Live in communion with God. (1Thessalonians 5:17) Fill your heart and mind with the Word. (Colossians 3:16)

I think that one of the most important steps a Christian can take to live as a child of the light is to let the Word of God transform our minds. (Romans 12:2) Our thought life can be our greatest struggle. Our mind should be filled with the light of the Word. It should reject the thoughts that are darkness and dwell on what is light. Darkness is mostly lies any way. If it's not an outright lie, it is a distortion of the truth that twists reality. We have to learn to recognize the source of our thoughts and how to quickly reject those that are not godly and dwell on those that are. Living as light begins in the heart but continues in the mind. (2Peter 1:4) We reject the lies of the Enemy. We interpret our daily experiences in the light of the Word and our relationship with God as our Father.

⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), The results of being a child of the light is good, right, and true. Why would you want anything else? If you want that fruit, those results, then you have to live as a child of the light. If you are not a child of the light, if you are darkness, the product of your life will be just the opposite, evil, unrighteous and a lie. To live for this world is to live a lie. Selfishness is evil. It results in unrighteous acts. To be a child of the light but choose not to follow Jesus in His sacrificial way of laying down His life, means you will have the fruits of darkness in your life. The choice is clear. It should be easy to make, but the enemy of our soul is clever and paints a lie so well that we need the light of Christ to see through it. (Genesis 3:1)

So live as children of the light ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. That is what Paul has been pointing out in the preceding verses. I like the way Paul puts this.

Commented [notes9]: 1 Thessalonians 5:5 (ESV)
⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

Commented [notes10]: 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (ESV)
¹⁷ pray without ceasing,

Commented [notes11]: Colossians 3:16 (ESV)
¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Commented [notes12]: Romans 12:2 (ESV)
² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Commented [notes13]: 2 Peter 1:4 (ESV)
⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Commented [notes14]: Genesis 3:1 (ESV)
¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

Try to discern... Nine times out of ten those who come to speak with me are doing that very thing. They aren't sure what would be pleasing to the Lord. They are trying to discern it and they want help. Most of the time I can't help. (1Thessalonians 2:4) It is usually something we each have to do on our own. I can share guidelines and principles, but in those areas that aren't clearly defined by the Word of God we simply *try* to discern. Often it comes down to which choice we have a peace about. (Colossians 3:15) **Children of the light live to please the Lord.** If we find our self not trying to discern what would please the Lord, it is a warning that we are slipping back into our old habits of just thinking of what would please us.

It's not as if the Lord has a life of drudgery planned for us. I remember how surprised I was to learn that, at times, what would please the Lord is for Him to see us enjoy His good creation in a wholesome and healthy way. (Ecclesiastes 2:24-25) He is pleased when we are filled with joy about good things that He has blessed us with. There are those times when pleasing the Lord means dying to self and facing difficulty. It can be very costly, but even then we have a joy that comes from serving the One we love. A child of the light finds inner joy even in difficulty when they know the heart of their Father is pleased. (2Corinthians 7:4)

When we try to discern what pleases the Lord, know that God is pleased with your effort to put Him first. Even if you make the wrong choice, if you sincerely sought to please the Lord in your decision, I believe He accepts it as if you had made the right decision. Of course He will give you a check in your spirit and give you that uncomfortable feeling to help guide you to the right path. Know that He sees your heart and your desire to please Him. (Psalm 139:23-24)

11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. When you recognize the darkness at work, speak out. Expose it. The darkness hates the light and you may be persecuted, but you should report that drug house down the street. You should warn that brother not to go through with cheating someone. You should say something about a compromising stand your friend is taking. The world will call you intolerant, for it can't tolerate truth, but we must shine. If you care, shine the light on the situation. There is a difference between being judgmental and speaking the truth in love. The one condemns from an attitude of superiority, and the other humbly offers a better way in love.

Sometimes we are tempted to compromise but think some good will come of it. Darkness is fruitless in regards to goodness. It bears another kind of fruit, the kind you don't want in your life.

Commented [notes15]: 1 Thessalonians 2:4 (ESV)

⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

Commented [notes16]: Colossians 3:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

Commented [notes17]: Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 (ESV)

²⁴ There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God,

²⁵ for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

Commented [notes18]: 2 Corinthians 7:4 (ESV)

⁴ I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.

Commented [notes19]: Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV)

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

This is where renewed thinking can be so helpful. The old self says the works of darkness can provide some kind of satisfaction and won't really cost you that much. Not only does it not bear good fruit, but instead it produces bad fruit that costs you way more than you ever intended to pay for that momentary thrill. (Romans 6:23)

Commented [notes20]: Romans 6:23 (ESV)

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We recently had another fallen leader in the area. The new relationship they think is going to be so fulfilling almost never lasts more than a year. Then they realize they gave up the good thing they had for something passing that ends up being painful. That is the way it goes with all the unfruitful works of darkness. Don't be deceived! Expose the lie to your own heart and mind. See it for what it really is.

¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. Most deeds of darkness are done in secret. (1Thessalonians 5:7) We know what others would think about it if they knew, so we have to hide the truth of what we are doing to be accepted. That's another lie. Eventually it will be known. Be sure your sin will find you out. (Numbers 32:23) Even if you get away with it in this world for most of your life, Jesus is right there hearing your every thought, the silent observer to your every deed. (Revelation 3:1-2)

Commented [notes21]: 1 Thessalonians 5:7 (ESV)

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

Not only should we not be participating in the deeds of darkness, we shouldn't even speak of those things. It should cause us to blush and shut our mouths. (Jeremiah 6:15) It makes us uncomfortable because we are light and the darkness is trying to get us to accept that darkness. By refusing to join the conversation, or by exposing it as unacceptable, we shine the light of truth and repel the darkness.

Commented [notes22]: Numbers 32:23 (ESV)

²³ But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.

Commented [notes23]: Revelation 3:1-2 (ESV)

¹ "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. E'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ²Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.'

Commented [notes24]: Jeremiah 6:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown," says the LORD.

¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. In our Wednesday night Bible study we are seeing how clearly Matthew's gospel points to Jesus being divine. Someone asked why the scholars don't accept that truth. It's not that they don't know it. It's that they refuse to accept it. They continue the same old arguments they know have been disproven. They have been exposed by the light. Now these so called "scholars" are exposed for their own agendas.

You see it in the political arena. Once you know someone has taken another person's quote out of context and manipulated what has been said for their own purposes, they are exposed for being deceptive. The light of what was really said shows the critic to be manipulative and not caring about the truth. It doesn't matter what party they are from. Both sides do it! (Proverbs 10:18)

Commented [notes25]: Proverbs 10:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool.

The light of the Word of God clarifies for us what is real, true, and lasting. It exposes people and situations for what they truly are. It makes things visible for those who are

willing to see. (Psalm 119:105) How we need the light of Biblical truth to cut through all the nonsense in our culture today.

Commented [notes26]: Psalm 119:105 (ESV)
¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Some believe that this was the song of the early church at baptisms. They acknowledged that the person who is without the light of Christ is spiritually dead, sleep walking through life. To die to that old nature and arise with Christ in His resurrection was to receive the light of Christ. It was to wake up and live as a child of the light. (Romans 6:3-4)

Commented [notes27]: Romans 6:3-4 (ESV)
³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?
⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

To be darkness is to be spiritually dead. It's to sleep through life and not enjoy the richness and fullness that is found in a relationship with our Creator. We often hear people that find life in Christ say that everything suddenly becomes more beautiful. Certainly, in every case, life becomes more meaningful. The psalmist wrote that it was in the light of God that we see light. (Psalm 36:9) Children of light see what those in darkness cannot see, both of good and evil. We recognize things for what they are. That means we are more accountable for our actions.

Commented [notes28]: Psalm 36:9 (ESV)
⁹ For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

Even a child of the light can fall back to sleep and harden their heart and dull their ears to the voice of the Spirit. We can intentionally shade our eyes from the light that exposes things and turn back toward the darkness. I won't debate whether or not we can become darkness, but I will ask why would you want to sleep through life? Why would you want to shade your eyes? Why you want to fall again for the lie, once you've experienced the light? (Hebrews 6:4-6)

Commented [notes29]: Hebrews 6:4-6 (ESV)
⁴ For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit,
⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,
⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Are you awake? (Revelation 3:2) **Are you trying to discern what pleases the Lord?** Are you walking as a child of the light? Are you having nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness? Or is it creeping into your life and stealing your time and your joy? Is it robbing you of your devotion? Is life becoming about self or increasingly about the Lord?

Commented [notes30]: Revelation 3:2 (ESV)
² Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.

Wake up sleeper! Rise from the dead! And Christ will shine on you! You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live like it!

Questions

- 1 What are the implications of "you were darkness"?
- 2 How do we become a child of light?
- 3 How do we live as a child of the light?
- 4 Do you experience verse 10?
- 5 What pleases the Lord?
- 6 What should we do when confronted with darkness?
- 7 Why is that difficult?

- 8 What does our culture need?
- 9 How does verse 14 apply to baptism?
- 10 How does it apply to us?
- 11 Did one of the cross references speak to you?