

Sermon – 25/01/2009 am

Light Exposes Evil

Study Text: Ephesians 5:11-14

Is this dress blue or green? Are these trousers blue or black? It is often difficult to tell the real colour of a garment inside the shop. What do you do in such a situation? If possible you take the garment outside into the sunlight. In the brilliant light of the sun you can see the true colour. The light of the sun reveals everything.

Paul urges the believers at Ephesus to walk as children of light. If they do so they will bear fruit, the fruit of goodness, righteousness and truth. They will walk in a manner that is pleasing to their heavenly Father. In this passage Paul continues with the theme of light and dark. He points out that those who walk as children of light cannot have fellowship with the fruitless deeds of darkness (5:11). The works of darkness are not really fruit – they are empty, useless fruit that even pigs refuse to eat.

No Fellowship

What do righteousness and lawlessness have in common? What fellowship has light with darkness? Paul asked these rhetorical questions in a letter to the church at Corinth (II Corinthians 6:15). He was explaining that as believers they could not go along with unbelievers to worship idols. They could not join in sinful pursuits as they once did. They must maintain a separation from deeds of darkness.

What do we sing in the first Psalm?

*Blessed is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
Nor stand in the path of sinners
Nor sit in the seat of mockers.*

As a new person in Christ Jesus, as those who have been made alive in Christ, as those who have the light of the Lord, we can no longer walk in the way of darkness; we cannot share in the sins of the ungodly. It is impossible says Paul. You are either in the light or still in darkness. You cannot be both.

A child of God does not delight in sin but turns away in abhorrence. A child of God does not harbour a secret desire for something immoral or evil. A child of God has undergone an inner transformation, not just an external makeover. He has not just put on a morality but has put on a new heart. His heart has been enlightened by the Spirit of God. His desires are different. He feels shame even to speak of what is done in the dark. He is repulsed by filthy language and crude jokes.

Paul is not here calling for us to live a monastic type of life. He is not telling us to cut ourselves off entirely from unbelievers. To do that we would have to 'leave this world', as he writes in another letter (I Corinthians 5:10). We read of Christians in the past who cut themselves off from the world, thinking this would stop them from sinning. Such thinking and teaching continues today. One characteristic of cults is withdrawal from society. Members withdraw from society to live a life of legalism and bondage.

Withdrawal is not what Paul is teaching in this passage. Note he says have no fellowship with the 'works of darkness' not with people as such. He directs the believers at Corinth to have no fellowship with a sexually immoral man but that man is a brother not an unbeliever (I Corinthians 5). He is a man who knows the gospel.

There are many who walk in darkness because the light of the Lord has not shone upon them. They walk in ignorance. The Lord calls you and me to walk as lights in this world, to shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15). We are to reflect the light of the Lord Jesus Christ in the things we do and say. Jesus said let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). Our light will not shine if we 'hide it under a bushel' by living like hermits.

Paul said he did not mean for the Corinthians not to associate with the sexual immoral, the covetous, the extortioners and idolaters of this world (II Corinthians 5:10). Jesus was known as a friend of tax collectors and sinners. He went among such people not to walk in their ways but to bring the light to them. Much grace is required on our part to go among prostitutes and drunkards, to go among covetous and corrupt men and women. We will not engage in their sinful activity but will engage them as people made in the image of God.

Expose Evil

When you turn on the kitchen light what do you see scurrying across the floor? Maybe nothing in your house but here in the church kitchen you will often notice something. What is it? You will notice cockroaches fleeing the light. These creatures hate the light. They seem to know they are not meant to be where they are. Termites also hate the light. Apparently if you leave a light on under your house it deters the white ants. They carry out their destructive work in the dark.

Human beings also love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). We have security lights all over our city to deter evil doers. We have sensor lights on our homes to scare away burglars. Of course many other sinful activities are done in the dark. But the light exposes such sin. Everything is exposed by the light, by Jesus Christ who is the light of the world (5:13). *Nothing in all creation is hidden from his sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account* (Hebrews 4:13).

Before that day arrives, while it is still day, we are to shine as lights to expose the deeds of sinful men and women. We do not do this to judge them, we do not do this with any sense of pride but we do it that they might turn from their wicked and shameful ways and walk in the light. We do it that God might be glorified in the children on light.

The word translated 'exposed' in verses 11 and 13 can also be translated as 'reprove'. But Paul do not mean for us to go around judging others but to be like search lights ready to rescue any who, being exposed and filled with shame, turn to the light to walk in it.

If we as believers live as children of light we will automatically expose the sinful ways of those around us. Sometimes people will try to hide from this light. They will try to resist it when cornered. Be assured that if you walk as a child of God you will get some reaction when you associate with those who are of this world.

Jesus approached the woman and the well in the heat of the day. As the Light he exposed her sin and by the grace of God she did not flee but came to the light of life. But Jesus is omniscient you say. Only Jesus could know she had had five husbands. Well that is true but

he also knew a lot about her from simple observation and questioning. He was alert to something lurking in the depths of her heart. He came not to judge but to save.

Jesus also interacted with the Pharisees and religious leaders. Their reaction to the light was the opposite to that of the woman at the well – and the woman caught in adultery. When Jesus exposed the Pharisee's sin of pride and hypocrisy they still refused to come to the light. They went away murmuring and threatening. They fled like the cockroaches instead of repenting and coming to the light as the sinful women did.

Repent

Clean drinking water is hard to come by in much of Africa. A friend of mine taught the people a simple way of purifying dirty water. Take a glass or clear plastic drink bottle, fill it with water and lie in on its side in the sun. The light and heat act to purify the water making it safe to drink.

The light of Jesus which you reflect into this dark world is for the purpose of purifying and making holy the lives of those around you. It is not your place to save anyone, nor is it your place to judge. The light that shines forth from your life will expose the evil deeds of men and women and when you tell them of the Lord Jesus Christ some, the elect, in the grace of God will turn and believe in the light of life.

This passage ends with words that appear to be a quotation – but from where.

Awake you who sleep

Arise from the dead

And Christ will give you light.

Similar words are found in Isaiah 60:1 – *arise and shine for your Lord has come*. Some suggest these words are part of an early hymn but there is no evidence for this. They may have been a declaration made at baptism but again there is no evidence. They are inspired words, and they are inspiring also. How wonderfully they express the new birth of a believer. They do this with three pictures.

Firstly – awake you who sleep. The light of Jesus is like the first rays of the morning sun that shine brightly into your bedroom. A new day has dawned, a day of grace and salvation. The night is over and we are to walk in the light of Jesus Christ the Son of God. We are to reflect his light as a new day dawns in the life of people from all nations.

Secondly – arise from the dead. The sleep we were in was the sleep of death. We were dead in our sins and many remain so. 'Arise from the dead' is the message that we shout into this dark world. Jesus is the light of life. Jesus gives life to the dead.

And finally – Christ will give you light. The light of Jesus exposes all sin. Jesus knows everything you do. He knows every thought you think. Do not try to hide as Adam did but come to the light and walk in the light. Walk as lights of Jesus today and every day till his glorious return.

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