

From Darkness to Light

Ephesians 5:8-14

Halifax: 18 May 2008

Introduction:

Today, we have the privilege of welcoming new members into our congregation.

- In the past, I have often selected a special text for such occasions,
 - But this time, there was no need to do that.
 - There was no need because the next passage in our regular sermon series is perfectly suited to the occasion.
- This morning, we come to Ephesians 5:8-14 which speaks about the change that has occurred in every believer's life—
 - Eph 5:8: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."
 - This morning we have persons coming into our fellowship who have had such a change in the last few weeks...
 - And what we see visibly in their uniting with the church is their translation from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son which is the kingdom of light.
 - I could hardly have selected a more suitable passage.

TRANS> To begin this morning,

I. I want you to see what a marvellous transformation is spoken of when our text says:

- **Eph 5:8: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."**

A. Notice the deplorable condition you were in...

- I say "you" because what is said here is true of every son and daughter of Adam.
1. It does not simply say that you were **in** the darkness, but that you **were** darkness itself!
 - a. If you are **in** the darkness, it means that it is dark all around you...
 - But when you **are** darkness, it means that you yourself are part of the darkness...
 - That even when there is light around you,
 - you are one who suppresses it.
 - You suppress it so that you neither see the light yourself,
 - nor do you help others to see it.

b. What does that mean in every day life?

- It means that you distort the truth about the things of God...
 - Let's look at three ways...

1) First, it means that wherever the glory of God is revealed,

- Instead standing in awe and admiring Him or giving thanks to Him,
 - You deny Him.
 - If you are looking at a starlit sky,
 - instead of seeing God's handiwork,
 - you see some impersonal wonder of nature or whatever you might call it.
 - Then, the next day, if you acquire the job that you always wanted,
 - Instead of giving thanks to God,
 - you attribute it to impersonal luck or to your own cleverness.
 - If God pours out His judgement upon an ungodly North America as He did when He sent our enemies to knock down the world trade towers in New York,
 - Instead of seeing the glory of His wrath and judgement,
 - you only see the hand of the instruments He used.

TRANS> Secondly, if you are darkness, it not only means that you suppress the glory of God when it is revealed...

2) It also means that you live a life of depravity...

- By that, I mean that you, who are made in the image of God,
 - instead of shining forth in the likeness of His perfect purity and love,
 - live a life that constantly misrepresents what He is.
 - An image is supposed to look like whatever it is an image of.
 - A painting or a photograph that is an image of you is supposed to look like you...
 - But when you were darkness, you, who were made in the image of God, distorted and darkened what God is...
 - Your whole life told lies about God.
 - You were still His image, but you were a corrupted image.

- To think of some examples, we only need to look back at some of the things we saw in previous sections of Ephesians:
 - Instead of wearing yourself out in service to others, you took what you could get from them...
 - Instead of forgiving others and being kind to them, you became bitter and malicious...
 - Instead of speaking gracious, helpful words, you spoke rotten words.
 - Instead of showing purity, you were filled with sexual immorality—
 - your heart teeming with lusts and uncleanness.

TRANS> All this is the darkness of depravity on top of the darkness of the suppression of God's glory...

- But there is still yet a third thing that it means for you to be darkness:

3) Thirdly, it means that you are without hope.

- You are, as they say, in the darkness of despair.
- Now when I speak of hope, I do not speak of it in the way we often use it in our society—I am using it in a more biblical way...
 - When we speak of hope, we often mean a feeling of hope—the same way we use guilt—a feeling of guilt.
 - But I am using it in a fuller way—
 - a way that includes feelings, but in a way that is not fully subjective.
- Real hope, according to the Bible, is not only an assurance about the future—it is a well-grounded assurance about the future...
 - A person can have a false assurance about the future, but biblical hope is a hope that will be realised.
- Those in the darkness do not such a hope, whether they know it or not.
 - When the message of the gospel comes to them,
 - the good news that Jesus Christ offered a sacrifice for the sins of the world so that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life...
 - the message is lost on them.
 - The darkness somehow swallows it up so that it does not get through.

TRANS> What a deplorable condition it is to be darkness...

- Even when light comes your way, it is quickly snuffed out.
 - And so you remain, ignorant of the glory of God, corrupt in your living, and without any real hope.

- 2. Now I would insist that you are all this darkness if left to yourself.
 - a. It is only by the grace of God that the light shines in your heart.
 - I will have more to say about the light coming to you in minute,
 - But first, I want you to understand that you are darkness until God changes you.

 - b. There are many different scenarios....
 - many different ways that persons are found in this darkness...

- 1) Some of you were like the Ephesians...
 - You were darkness and you also lived in the darkness...
 - What mean is, you were in a place where you did not even have an opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

 - Oh yes, there was the light of God's creation that shows you clearly that there is a God and that reveals to you His eternal power and divine nature...
 - but you had no exposure to the message of salvation.
 - The light was not shining around you,
 - but even if it had been,
 - you were such darkness that it would have done no good.

- 2) Some others of you were like I was...
 - You were darkness and you were in a church that actually hid the light rather than spreading the light.
 - That is one some churches are all about—
 - It's very said, but they are actually "light suppression centres."
 - They have a name that they live, but they are dead.
 - They have a form of godliness, but they deny the power.

 - This is so because they use the words of scripture and name the name of Christ,

- but they so distort the gospel of salvation that people come away thinking that they have no need of Christ as He is revealed in the gospel...
- What I mean is,
 - they are told that they are good people who can do good.
 - They are not told that they are sinners who can do nothing...
 - That apart from a living faith in Jesus Christ, they will be condemned to the Lake of Fire.
- The very gospel that is supposed to be preached is completely lost.
 - Sadly, there are many churches like this in our land...
 - They neither preach the law of God so that it exposes sin, not the gospel of God so that it directs sinners to Christ for mercy and grace.

TRANS> But there is a third scenario that illustrates the darkness that we all are by nature even more...

- 3) It is the scenario of the one who is in a church that has the light of the gospel, but remains in the darkness...
- They are in a situation where they hear the gospel preached and see the fruits of being lived out around them...
 - The light is shining brightly all around, but they are not enlightened.
 - The light is snuffed out when it comes near and never gains entrance into their heart.
 - This is a terrible condition.
 - But the scripture says that it is actually the condition of every person born of Adam except Christ until God changes him.
 - The truth is that no matter how sweetly and how pleadingly and how fearfully and how powerfully the gospel is preached to you...
 - and no matter how consistently it is lived out before you...
 - not one of you would have ever embraced the light apart from the working of God by His Holy Spirit in your heart.
 - The scripture says that the natural man—the man left to himself—does not receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are foolishness to Him.

TRANS> Darkness is the natural condition of every human being since the fall...

- But to these Ephesians who had come to know Christ, Paul says:

B. “For you were once darkness, **but now** you are light in the Lord.”

1. You have no light in yourself—

- You are only in the light if you are in Jesus Christ.
 - He is the one who made the difference.
- a. When He came to you and called you, you began to see clearly those things that you had suppressed when you were darkness.
 - You began to see what God is really like...
 - a holy God who cannot look upon sin...
 - yet a God of mercy who sent His Son to die for sinners.
 - You also began to see what you are really like before Him and you began to loathe yourself and to be deeply ashamed...

b. You were humbled...

- You stopped thinking that you could somehow fix things...
 - that you could somehow get along without God’s salvation...
 - And so you turned to Jesus Christ.
 - You said,
 - “Lord, I cannot pay for my sins. I trust in your offering for my sins on the cross alone.”
 - “Moreover, I realise that no matter how hard I try,
 - I can never live in a way that would be acceptable to you, not because your way is unreasonable, but because I am so full of sin...
 - so I look to you to transform me as you have promised until at last I am made like you on the last day when you come to judge the world.”

TRANS> Now you were able to see things as they really are!

2. This transformation from darkness to light takes place at different times in a person’s life...and in different ways.

- a. For some of you, it was a sudden transformation out of ignorance...
 - You had never heard the gospel and as soon as it came to you,
 - you recognised that it was all true...

- Everything became clear all at once and you were powerfully changed.
- b. For others of you, it was a sudden transformation out of rebellion...
- Perhaps you were that one who was exposed to the true gospel for years and for years it had no effect on you...
 - but then suddenly, and powerfully, you fell under conviction of your sin.
 - You felt the weight of all your sin upon you and you could not get to Jesus Christ fast enough.
- c. Then others of you came in a more gradual way...
- You understood a little here and little there,
 - you embraced this and you embraced that...
 - and you can't say exactly when you really first began to embrace Christ, but you know that you are trusting in Him now...
 - You don't know exactly when the sun came up, but you know that it is up now.
 - Some of you even grew up in a faithful covenant home.
 - And it may even be that from as far back as you can remember, you have understood your desperate need of Christ...
 - You were told that from infancy and all along the way you have never really doubted it...
 - All along the way you have looked to your Saviour and as far as you are concerned, there has never been another option...
 - What else could you do, being undone and in such need?

TRANS> But whatever the case,

- You need to understand that if you are in the light today,
 - it is because God has worked in your heart to show you His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
 - But for His grace, you would still be dead in your trespasses and sins...
 - You would be the very darkness itself.
 - He is the one that has transformed you from darkness to light.
3. What a splendid transformation it is!
- a. Now you are able to see what God is really like.
- You don't have to pretend any more!

- You can see how pure and holy He is—
 - You can accept Him as He is because you have a Saviour to take away His wrath.

- b. You can look honestly at the high standard to which He has called you—
 - even a standard that is unattainable in your fallen estate...
 - You can look at it because you have hope that He is at work in you.
 - You want it to be high because you are sick of living as you do...
 - And you know that He has promised to bring you up to it.
 - Already you are experiencing the change...
 - You are learning to love the way Christ loves, to forgive the way Christ forgives, to worship the way Christ worships.

- c. You are able to live openly before the all glorious God!
 - You are able to come to Him with boldness because you have Christ as your Saviour.
 - You now know God!

TRANS> You are light who were once darkness!

- That is what God has done!
 - That is the splendid transformation.
 - But now that there has been this change, there is an imperative that follows—a command...
 - Not that this has been done for you, there is something you are to do.

II. You are to walk as children of light!

A. If you have had this change, you have been born of the light...you are a child of light.

1. The light has flooded into your soul and you are a new creation in Christ...
 - so there is to be a corresponding change in behaviour.
 - All of you who are members of this church made a solemn promise that you would endeavour,
 - both in private life and in the work of the church, to live as the followers of Christ.
 - That's what it means to walk as children of light.

2. You are to let the light shape everything you believe and everything you do.

- a. Yes, there are truths in God’s word that are hard to accept at first...
 - You may not like the doctrine of Hell or you may not like the fact that God forgives the vilest of sinners when they repent...
 - You may not like the fact that God has told us how we are to worship Him—you may want to worship Him in your own way.

- b. And yes, He calls you to do things that you do not always want to do!
 - He calls you to love your enemies and to do it in tangible ways—to do good to them...
 - And He calls you to live a pure life—to deny ungodly lusts that war against the soul...

- c. But you need to remember that you are, of yourself, darkness and God alone is light...
 - You are therefore to walk according to the light of His word...you will go astray if you follow your own wisdom and desires.
 - And part of being shaped by the light, besides just following His commandments,
 - Is being humble and realising that you do not know what is right or best...
 - And part of walking in the light is also in being filled with gratitude,
 - realising that you have been pardoned at God’s own expense when you deserved only to be condemned...
 - Yes, walking in the light is walking in the joy of one who has been forgiven all your sins as well as walking in obedience to God’s commands.

- B. As an incentive to you to maintain this walk, verse 9 reminds you that the fruit of light is in all goodness, righteousness and peace.
 1. The NKJV says “the fruit of the Spirit.”
 - There is a variation on this word in the manuscripts we have...
 - but the idea in either case is the same:
 - that if you walk as children of light, you produce good fruit.
 - The point is that you ought to walk in the light because walking in the light will bring about good in your life...
 - It will make you fruitful instead of barren—
 - Like a garden instead of like a desert.

2. This fruit is described by three words...
 - a. First, “goodness.”
 - This speaks of simply being good and kind...
 - There is a sense in which it is doing what is beyond the call of justice...
 - of looking for ways to show kindness to others and to love them that go beyond mere justice...
 - of following Jesus example who loved us even when we were unlovely.
 - You can only imagine what a wonderful place this world would be if everyone lived this way!
 - b. Secondly, righteousness...
 - This has to do with living according to God’s commandments...
 - with measuring up to what He requires.
 - As long as you are in the darkness, you can’t even bear to really look at God’s commandments because you see how short you come...
 - But when you are in the light and you have the forgiveness of Christ, you can live before a higher standard because you are not seeking to be justified by that standard...
 - and then, by the grace of God, you can more and more conform to that standard...
 - c. And then there is truth...
 - This has to do with living in reality before the true God...
 - What I have already spoken about—seeing that you are a sinner and that Christ alone is Saviour and living as if that is true...
 - Confessing this and not acting as if God owes you something, but rather, as the truth teaches, that He has given you far more than you deserve...
 - And living in the reality that you are on your way to heaven and that God is at work in you...
 - It is a life of love and delight in God—the real God—God as He is revealed in truth.

TRANS> And so you see that walking in the light is a beautiful thing!

- It is a life of goodness, righteousness and truth!

- It is something to eagerly pursue...
- Why would you ever want to live in the darkness—it's just stupid isn't it?
 - There you are, cantankerous and moody and full of vile affections...
 - selfish and greedy and unhelpful...
 - far away from the Lord...unable to see His glory and His love...
 - Why would you want that?
 - Walk in the light!
 - There is good fruit for those who walk in the light.

C. Verse 10 tells you to be eager to do so!

- It says:
 - v. 10: “finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”
- 1. The word translated “finding out” carries the idea of both proving and approving...
 - It carries a very full—almost a double meaning...
 - First, that you are to labouring to understand what pleases God—
 - that you are to give yourself earnestly to the task of understanding how His word applies to you every day...
 - that you are to meditate on His law day and night—to be constantly applying what He says to everything you do...
 - to be hungry to fill every aspect of your life with what is pleasing to Him.
 - You are to prove what He wants—to make certain of it.
 - Secondly, that you are to approve what is acceptable to Him...
 - There are times when you know His will and perhaps are even prepared to do it,
 - but you don't really approve of it...
 - It is a sort of raw obedience if you know what I mean.
 - Well, that is where you have to start,
 - but this word calls you to go beyond that...
 - to learn to delight in doing His will...
 - to approve of it—to see how right and good and true it is.

2. The word **acceptable** that is used here in “finding out what is **acceptable** to the Lord” is also instructive
- It is a word that is almost always used in connection with sacrifice...
 - a. And so this involves coming to delight in sacrificial service and sacrificial love...
 - It is only through meditation on your Lord’s mercy and goodness in the gospel that you can come to delight in sacrifice.
 - When you see the expression of His love for ruined sinners in a fallen world,
 - then it causes you to be much more ready to lay down your life for others...
 - to give your life for others at home, in the work place, in the church, and in the community.
 - You know that with such sacrifices God will well-pleased.
 - b. Yet, all the while, those who walk in the light know that even their greatest sacrifices of service are not acceptable to the Lord,
 - for the light of God reveals to them that they still come short of His glory...
 - You realise that your sacrifices of service are acceptable to God only as they are offered through the name of Jesus Christ.
 - And so while there is an eagerness to serve and to do all that you can, there is also a humility for those who walk in the light.

TRANS> So all of you who have been transferred from the darkness to the light,

- See that you walk as children of light...
 - finding out what is acceptable to the Lord...
- But this is not the end of what Paul says here about walking in the light...
 - He goes on to write about how walking in the light affects your relationships with those who are yet darkness.
- He shows that...

III. As light in the Lord, you are now in opposition to the darkness.

- That is the main idea of verses 11-14
 - Eph 5:11-14: And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes

manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

- Here you are told three things that are involved with living in opposition to the darkness:

A. First, you are told that you are to have no fellowship with the works of darkness...

1. This is, of course, quite obvious...

- If you have come to know God and to understand who He is, what sin is, what pleases Him and what doesn't,
 - if the Spirit has shown you these things through the sure word of God...
 - Then it is altogether inappropriate for you to go on doing the deeds of those who are in the dark.
- You know what sin is, you know what your sin brought upon your Saviour, you know that God's way is an excellent way...
 - so obviously it is not for you join with those who are still the darkness.
 - What business do you have in doing those things of which you are now ashamed?

2. If it is so obvious, why does Paul say it?

- He says it because he knows what we are like...
 - He knows that we are not yet perfected.
 - He knows that very often,
 - rather than doing the good that we want to do,
 - we do the evil that we hate.
 - Of course this is about as stupid and stupid can get...
 - When we have known Christ...
 - But still, somehow, the works of darkness are often very attractive to us...
 - When we would rather be selfish than to love...
 - When we would rather be immoral than pure and holy...
 - When we would rather be lazy than wearing ourselves out to serve...
- Even though we know the character of these unfruitful works of darkness...
 - Even though we know how unattractive, how unhelpful, how offensive to God they are...

- Yet we find that we are drawn to them...
- And so we must told on no uncertain terms:
 - “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.”
 - We are not to support them or encourage them or promote them in any way.

TRANS> And then he tells what to do instead of participating.

B. Instead we are told to expose them...

- That is the second thing you are to do when you are light...
- 1. Paul makes it clear that exposing what is hidden in darkness is something that light does...
 - If you are light, you will expose the works of darkness...
 - a. You see, the works of darkness are works that are hidden away under all sorts of disguises and things...
 - You remember what I said about the darkness before...
 - It constantly suppresses the light of God—the truth about God.
 - It can't bear to think about God because God is justly offended with the unfruitful works of darkness and condemns the sinner.
 - b. When you are light, it is just a fact that when you come around the darkness,
 - everything that is nicely hidden away gets exposed...
 - The unbeliever starts to squirm when a faithful believer comes around.
 - The immoral man feels dirty and ashamed...
 - And the self-righteous person begins to be exposed as a sinner.
 - Why else do you think they get so angry with those who walk in the light?
 - Whenever Jesus came around,
 - people were either really bothered and wanted him to go away,
 - or they repented and came to the light.
 - c. Verse 13 explains that it is a property of light to reveal what is in the darkness...
 - If you hear a noise in your house at night and you want to know what it is, you turn on the light...
 - Then you discover the robber that broke in...

- or you realise that it was only the cat...
- The light makes everything visible.
 - That is just what light does when it is present.

2. Now you tell me how this goes over...

a. Here is a person living in the darkness.

- He is desperately trying to deny the truth about God and about sin...
 - He has himself fairly well enveloped in darkness...
 - He has found others who mutually encourage each other that there is no God...
 - or at least, that there is no God like the God of the Bible...
 - a God who requires the bloody sacrifice of His Son to atone for sin...
 - And they are all feeling pretty good in their delusion—
 - even though they may not agree exactly,
 - they all feel quite sure that the true God is something different than He is...

TRANS> So here they are...

b. And you... you ... the one who was once darkness but is now light in the Lord.

- And there you go bringing up before them the very thing they have been trying to suppress...
 - They were having some success until you came along!

c. How do you think these persons are going to receive you?

- Probably something like the way they received Christ...
 - They are going to pick you apart, looking to find ways to accuse you...
 - They are going to try to lead you away from the truth...
 - They are going to try to lead you into sin—to tempt you, or to shame you for following Christ...
 - They are going to try everything in their power to make the light go away because it is exposing them and making them really uncomfortable.

3. But you see what the exhortation is...

a. You are to keep on exposing them.

- The word translated **expose** means to convict, or to reprove—
 - to show them the wrong of their way!
- b. The temptation will be pull back and to say nothing...
 - to turn down the light...
 - but this is telling you to turn it up!
 - You are to deliberately show them that they are wrong.
 - Of course those who are in the darkness are going to hate it and they are going to say that you are narrow and obnoxious and call you all sorts of names...
 - That's why you need this exhortation to expose them—to show them their wrong—
 - and why you need this reminder that that this is just what light does.
 - Don't think there is something wrong with you if you are just living a Godly life and speaking the truth.

TRANS> But of course do not stop with merely exposing their sin...

C. The third thing you are to do as light is to call them to come to Jesus Christ.

1. That is what verse 14 is about when it says:

- v 14: Therefore He says, "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."
- When this says, therefore **He** says, the word **He** could also be translated by the word **it**.
- Grammatically, one translation is as good as the other...
 - But when you look at the context,
 - it seems that this is saying that the light is the thing that calls sinners to awaken from sleep and to arise from the dead.
 - The light shines into the lives of people to expose their sin...
 - not just to shame them,
 - but in order to point them to Christ!
 - They unbeliever is as one asleep—he does not see his danger...
 - He is even as one dead—he is dead in trespasses and sins...
 - And the light breaks into life and says,
 - Wake up! Don't you see what you are before God?"

- Rise up! Don't you see that you are dead—cut off from the life of the true God?

2. Now someone will say,

- But what use is there for calling them?
 - They are in the darkness.
 - How can they awaken themselves? How can they arise from the dead.
- The same way you did...
 - It is the Saviour who gave you life—
 - Can He not give them life also?
 - Of course He can!
 - Point them Him!
 - Tell them that He who gave you life can give them life!
 - Christ will give you light.

Conclusion...

- Now I wonder,
 - Who is here among us today that is yet in the darkness...
 - What for?
 - Oh, I know that you don't like the light...
 - I know how it exposes you...
 - I know how it shows you that you are dirty and that you are darkness...
- But wake up, rise up and come to Christ and He will give you light...
 - You can't give yourself light, but He can give you light...
 - He can take that darkness that you are and transform it into light so that it can be said of you as it was said of these Ephesians...
 - "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."
 - Now wouldn't that be absolutely wonderful?
 - To no longer be slinking around in the shadows...
 - but to be coming to the Lord in truth...
 - to be putting off the old ways that are so corrupt and to be renewed in the image of God in righteousness and true holiness?
 - to be established in the sure and certain hope of eternal life?

- Oh don't you see?
 - Jesus Christ is the light of the world!
 - Come to Him and He will give you light!
 - He will fully pardon you and you will make you to live.

And you who are light...

- What gratitude should be yours that you who were once darkness are now light....
 - Everything is marvellously changed for you!
 - How eager you should be to full of the fruits of life that please the living God!
 - How opposed you should be to participating in the works of darkness.
 - How eager you should be let your light shine so that others will see their need of Christ and come to Him.