

Wake Up, Sleepy Christian! – *Ephesians 5:8-14*

Introduction – The older I get, the more frequent the times I find myself sleepy. Spiritual slumber is not easily evaded either. "Darkness" makes us spiritually sleepy – dull to the things of God. What will wake us up?

Overview – Christian (for that is who he is addressing), you used to be darkness, but now you are light. Walk like it (v8). The natural fruit of light (or Spirit) is goodness, righteousness, and truth (v9), proving what God likes (v10). Do not fellowship with the opposite, the unfruitful works of darkness, reprove them instead (v11), for what they do in the darkness does not need a "dialogue" (v12). Living in light will make all manifest (v13). So "wake up," sleepy Christian, and shine (v14).

Light, Creation and Revelation – "*God is light, and in Him is no darkness – none at all*" (1 John 1:5). God, Who is the Word, spoke the Word, and He Who is Light said, "*Let there be light*," and creation began. He visited His people in the glory-cloud and pillar of fire, and was symbolized in the lit lampstand of the tabernacle (Num 8:1-4). The sending of Christ was the giving of "*...light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth*" (Isaiah 49:6).

Jesus said "*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life*" (John 8:12). The Old Creation had fallen into darkness and the New Creation He brought gave light and life (Isaiah 60:1-3). This Light was shown forth clearly in the coming of the Word-made-flesh (John 1:4-5) and Jesus instructed His disciples to walk in the light while He was with them (John 12:35-36). John instructed the same (1 John 1:5-7).

You Were Once Darkness – Darkness is a refusal to acknowledge the light of Jesus, His truth and words (John 3:19-21). Darkness refers to ignorance (Rom 1:21) and moral perversion (Isaiah 5:20). These are not ultimately solved with more education or more law. What a man caught up in darkness needs is Light. Nevertheless, when God speaks forth light, just as when light is forced upon darkness, darkness must flee. This is what God did in our hearts (2 Cor 4:6).

Walk As Children of Light – But in the Lord, we are now light. We were darkness (not simply "in" darkness) but now we are light in the Lord (v8). While this has real application for some in the church who are actually still unsaved, I think Paul has in mind the rest of us: children of light who need to walk like it.

The Contrast of Fruit and Works (vv9-11) – The works of the flesh are contrasted with the fruit of the Spirit in Gal 5 and the unfruitful works of darkness are contrasted with the fruit of the Light here – these are parallel teachings. As children of light we are no longer naturally given to darkness or to the flesh. It is now contrary to our nature; you could say that sin is unnatural for us now. Contrast that with the fruit of the Spirit (light) "*...which is all goodness, righteousness and truth*." The point is not that we are now instantly good little Christians with no temptations or struggle with the flesh. The point is that when we give in to the temptation and walk in darkness, it is unnatural. We lie to ourselves about God and about ourselves in order to (if even for the momentary pleasure) walk in the darkness again.

But Rather, Expose Them – We don't have to expose the darkness by constantly wagging our bony finger, declaring this sin and that sin, for "*it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done in secret*." How do you expose darkness? You walk as children of light. You walk in love (see 4:25-5:7). Remember, those who are still naturally in the darkness can't and won't get out by our moralizing. They need light. They need Christ to shine on them. But then, so do sleepy Christians...

A Resurrection Hymn for Christians (v14) – This is not a direct quotation of any one verse (Isaiah 60:1 is close). Many believe it was an early hymn that the Ephesians would know. It celebrates the coming of light with resurrection language ("Arise from the dead!") but it has implications for sleepy Christians as well. Sleepy Christians are those who are walking in darkness, playing with their little "precious" like Gollum in the darkness – but they aren't Gollum, and they need to wake up. But like someone who is asleep, they often aren't aware they are asleep. They are unresponsive. They are unresponsive to the law, to the light, to following Christ – they find the Word dull, the sermons boring, the times of confession unnecessary. Waking them up is not raising them from the dead – but it can feel like it. This is the work of revival, the work of renewal; it is the work of Christ, His Spirit, Who is Light. And all of it is the work of God and not of man. Any true revival, whether of an individual or a nation, will not come apart from work of God's Spirit, which we cannot control (John 3:8).

But we can notice Paul's pastoral approach. The fact that he cannot control the Spirit does not stop him from declaring the Word of God, of calling for repentance and a renewed faith. Straight scripture, expository teaching, songs and singing from and about that Word – Paul seems to believe that God will do something. Ezekiel cannot breathe life into a valley of bones and a preacher cannot bring forth revival. But God calls us to do so. And the Spirit of light and life, the joy of salvation – returns.