



Be Aware of the Darkness

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Ephesians 5:11-14

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¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

(Pastor prays)

The world we live in lacks clarity,¹⁵ and the gospel of Jesus Christ clears things up. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46. ³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer

them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Does that concern you at all, that in the economy of God there is profound clarity – sheep and goats, wheat and tares and in our passage, light and darkness? The problem is that we live in a confused world where love is cheap, and sex is king. We live in a world where the waters of morality have been muddied to the degree that we don't even know what manhood and womanhood is anymore. It's a confusing world, and then you bring your stuff into this confusion. You bring your hurt, your prejudice, your secret struggles, and add that to the mix. There's confusion. But the Bible says our God is not a God of confusion but of peace. It's what Paul is getting at here – about our confused world.

-A Confused World Needs Gospel Clarity

The gospel scrutinizes your life

You have to take a hard and honest look at who you are and how you are living. In verse 11, Paul uses the phrase "the unfruitful works of darkness."
What does that even mean? The unfruitful works of darkness are the parts of your life that bring no benefit to man, no glory to God, and no good to your soul. And those unfruitful works of darkness are all around us and instead of trying our best to stay away from those things, we typically want to know

where the line is and get as close to the edge without crossing it. So we flirt with sin₂ and we don't hate it. Whatever sin it is, Paul seems to have sexual sins in mind₁₅; these sins come from the darkness of concealment₁ and they lead to the darkness of hell. What Ebola is physically, your sin is spiritually. You know what's there₁ and yet you hug and kiss the sweaty Ebola corpse and wonder why you are sick. And Paul says in verse 11, *"Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."* Find a way to take the drastic action and break the cycle. Instead, Paul says, here is what you do with evil. You expose it.

Let me give you an illustration. If you walk into the kitchen at 1 am and turn on the light, and there's a huge cockroach on the floor, what are you going to do with it? You are going to kill it!

John Owen, the great Puritan, said, "Be always at it while you live. Don't miss a day from this work. Be killing sin or it will be killing you!" Expose them. It's what the gospel does. And when sin is exposed, you have no thought about someone else's sin. It's your sin that occupies your thoughts and as long as you're making excuses, justifying, or explaining away your sin, you've not turned the light on. The light of Christ has yet to expose the depth of your sin. When the light of Christ shines into your life, you don't ignore evil. To ignore evil is to encourage it. To keep quiet about evil is to protect it. It's what the gospel does. A confused world needs gospel clarity. The gospel scrutinizes your life.

The gospel teaches you to hate sin

I mentioned it earlier but₁ Paul says in verse 12, *"For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret."* That_{is} sort of sin that we want to nurture is so vile it should be discussed in as little detail as possible. This speaks to where we are. We have grown so hardened in our sinful world that very little shocks us. There is not much that embarrasses us anymore. In fact, it can quite easily be said we have forgotten how to blush. It's similar to when God asks the hard questions about his people in Jeremiah 6:15. *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. And what Paul is saying here in verse 12 is that the gospel transforms us so that we hate the sin that separates us from God. In fact, we hate it so much, that it’s hard to talk about it. But that doesn’t seem to be the case. Oftentimes, we don’t hate the sin so much that it’s hard to talk about. We are fascinated with *its* so much we can’t stop talking about it. And Paul says in verse 13, we shouldn’t gossip about sin, we must shine the light of the gospel on it. Verse 13 says, ¹³ *But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible.* The gospel has something to say about all our deeds, work relationships, parenting, money, and our suffering. You know, there can be darkness in our suffering. It can put you in a hole that becomes sinful because pain can become an idol that you harbor and nurture. Instead, shine the light of the gospel on the darkness of your struggle.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, ¹⁶ *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.* ¹⁷ *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,* ¹⁸ *as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

Your confused world needs gospel clarity, and in verse 14, Paul gives us clarity.

The gospel teaches us to love the power of the cross

I love verse 14. Here is a call to all the unconverted. Paul is probably paraphrasing Isaiah 60:1 when he says, *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.* In verse 14, you find the gospel in summary form. Let’s take it phrase by phrase.

Awake o sleeper. If you are without Christ, you are asleep in the darkness of sin, and you are unaware of your lost condition and the tragic destiny that awaits you if you don’t turn from your sin today and turn to Christ. And unless

something happens, unless you get convicted of your sin, you will sleep through God's time of grace. I'm calling, God is calling, for you to awake.

The next phrase is, arise from the dead. Your sin has made you dead to the good things of God. You are dead to the real joy in life. You are dead to the love that God has for you, and this is a call to turn from sin. Turn from those dead ways of sin. It can't be worth it to live on the earth in deadness and then die an eternal death in Hell, because there is good news.

Verse 14 says, *and Christ will shine on you.*" God has provided a remedy for every sinful person that will come to him through his son. Listen to the words of Isaiah 55:6-7. *"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

That forgiveness and pardon are found at the cross of Christ, where love and justice meet. *"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

(Pastor prays)