

February 10, 2013  
Light!

*Living in the Light!*  
Ephesians 5:8-14

**Opening words:** This is my final message in my four-part sermon series, *Light!* By now I hope you know the word light is used 272 times in the King James Version. Sometimes, it means an illuminating object. Sometimes, it means much more. These messages are based on those scriptures. To date, we have learned three different divine truths from the single word "light".

- 1. The creator of life, itself, was God. (Genesis 1:8)**
- 2. The standard for living is Jesus (John 8:2-20)**
- 3. Your Christian witness is valuable. (Matthew 5:14-16)**

Today, we look at our last passage that refers to light, Ephesians 5:8-14. In those verses we learn about what the light exposes in our dark world. May God give you ears to hear these sacred words. Let me call this message *Living in the Light!*

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**Ephesians 5:8-14** <sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. <sup>14</sup> This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,  
rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

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Studies tell us 80% of people just don't like change. There is nothing new about that fact. It has always been that way. For example, history tells us Ben Franklin suggested something new to the citizens of Philadelphia. He wanted to add streetlights to help security. The powers that be thought that was a wasteful idea, so Franklin had a streetlight installed in front of his own home at his own expense. Soon the walking traffic in front of his home increased because people felt safer. Suddenly, it became the fashionable thing to do. Within a short time streetlights began to pop up all over the city. Light has always added to security. If you can understand that simple story, then you can understand this morning's scripture lesson. Let us look at it together.

We are in the fifth chapter of Ephesians. It is important that you know the background of this epistle. The author of this letter is the Apostle Paul.

He was writing to the Christian congregation in the city of Ephesus, which is located in present day Turkey. The date it was written was approximately A.D. 60. This epistle is unique. Paul is not writing them to address any particular problem. There is not heresy or internal conflict. Instead, Paul is writing them a word of encouragement. He is challenging them to strive for perfection. The words that you heard today are part of a larger section in the epistle that deals with practical ways the church can fulfill God's purpose. He is using the word "light" to symbolize Jesus. Remember, Jesus is the Light of the World. Being "children of the light" means two things. First, we are to live in a way that pleases God. Second, we are to stay away from the darkness of this world. That is not easy to do because this world is such a dark place. It is our dark world that grabs our attention today.

This message revolves around two painful realities. First, our world is filled with dark behavior. Does anyone want to argue with me about that statement? Our world seems to have a surplus of dark behavior. Second, our world is filled with dark beliefs. Sometimes, dark beliefs take the form of bad theology. Sometimes, dark beliefs are a reaction to dark behavior. In other words, you can know Jesus as your Lord and Savior and hold fast to your dark beliefs. There is a part of that statement in all of us. Remember, Paul wrote these words to challenge a Christian congregation. Salvation was not a question. He was challenging them toward perfection. I am challenging you toward perfection. So if you are ready to begin, say, **"Amen!"**

### **Dark Behavior**

We live in a dark world. How many examples do you need? The dark item that has dominated the news this week is the story of the five year old boy by the name of Nathan. You know the story. Nathan boy was abducted from his school bus. His school bus driver was shot and killed trying to liberate the children. Nathan was taken hostage but is now free. I am glad to say Nathan is acting normally. I hope this experience doesn't come out somewhere else in his life. His abductor, 65 year old Jimmy Lee Dykes, is dead. Many are glad he is dead. Are you glad he is dead? How can you hear that story and not believe we live in a dark world?

You don't have to go to Alabama to find dark stories. You can stay here right in the Mahoning Valley. How about the story of fourteen year old Teddy Foltz? Neighbors called him a great kid who loved to be outside. They were concerned about him so they called the authorities. They said nothing happened, and Teddy is now dead. The police say he was killed by his mother's boyfriend, Zaryl Bush. His mother, Shain Widdersheims, has been charged with child endangerment. How can you hear that story and not believe we live in a dark world? I could go on but I won't. I am tired of talking about darkness. All I want to talk about is the light. If you believe we live in a dark world, say, **"Amen!"**

## Dark Beliefs

We live in a dark world and there are many dark beliefs. As disciples, we know our only hope of salvation is Jesus. On critical days, I see any theology or philosophy of life that excludes Jesus as dark. That means there is a great deal of darkness in our world. The largest world religion is Christianity, but Christianity is not professed by the majority of the world. As a matter of fact, only one-third of the world is Christian. That means two-thirds of the world's population is not Christian. Mathematically speaking, we are a minority. How many world religions can you name? (Judaism, Hinduism, Islam) How many cults can you name? (Jehovah's Witness, Christians Scientists, Mormonism) How many philosophies can you name! There seems to be a new one all the time. I learned of a new one the other day.

I watched most of the Super Bowl at home. When the first half ended, the halftime began. Did you watch halftime? Beyonce' came out and wanted to show the world she could sing. I guess there was a question whether she could sing after the Presidential inauguration. She put on quite a show. The music was loud. The pyrotechnics were exploding. The singers and dancers were singing and dancing. Beyonce' had a costume that grabbed every straight man's attention. She sang all her big hits. I don't know which one I loved the most. (That is because I can't name one of her songs.) When halftime ended I was exhausted. I may never be the same. It wasn't until the next day somebody told me about a new controversy. Did you see what she did?

Somewhere in the extravaganza, she placed her hands into a shape of a triangle. They tell me the shape of a triangle is a symbol. It is the symbol for the Illuminati. Have you ever heard of the Illuminati? The word means *enlightened*. It can be traced back to the time of the American Revolution. At that time there was a man by the name of Adam Weishaupt who lived in Bavaria. They say he established a secret society to control world affairs. Using governments and celebrities, their goal was to establish a new world order. Some say it was linked to Satanism. Some say that secret society still exists today. They say many contemporary politicians are members of the Illuminati. (Bill Clinton and George Bush) Some say certain entertainers are linked to Illuminati. Some say Beyonce' is part of the Illuminati as a secret member? What do you think? Did Beyonce' make that triangle with her hands to reveal her membership? Do you believe Beyonce' made that triangle shape with her hands because it was part of the show? I don't think she is, but I do believe she made that symbol to create controversy. Things like that bother me because I know the truth. I know Jesus is the Light of the World. Sometimes dark beliefs are rooted in our bad theology. Sometimes our bad beliefs are created by our overexposure to the darkness.

In a few weeks, I head back to Russia for this year's mission trip. We are going to an orphanage to help challenged children. I like these trips for several reasons. One of the things that I like most is relating to my fellow team members. People who go on these trips are people-oriented people. They are not motivated by money or comfort. They don't use patriotism as an excuse to do nothing for people outside this area.

They simply love people. In a couple of weeks, you really get to know someone because you have time to talk.

One night, I was sitting at the end of the hall in some Russian orphanage. The children had gone to bed so I had an opportunity to talk to a fellow team member, Zack. I love to ask questions, so I asked Zack this question. Where do you find the most stress in your life? I thought he would say school or work. Do you know what he said? He said, "The greatest amount of stress in his life comes from the news." He said, "The news reminds him of the present state of our world and he makes me worry about the future." Then he thought and said, "The news makes me wonder if I want to bring children into this world. The world is in a bad way." Can anyone here relate to Zack? Have you ever wondered about the present state of our world? Have you ever wondered about the future of our world? Have you ever been paralyzed by hopelessness?

Several years ago, Kathryn was on a plane. She was leading a group of college students to be part of a Habitat project in Florida. She called it the "alternative spring break". Did you know some college students go to Florida over spring break to party? She was leading a group of college students to Florida to build homes for the poor. As she sat on the plane, the man next to her asked why she was going to Florida. She said, "I am going to work on Habitat homes." The man wasn't impressed. He looked at her and said, "We built Habitat homes in my town but the residents didn't take care of them." In other words, he was saying, "Don't bother!"

Several years ago, I was walking through the hallways of this church. I was excited because the kids were going to give their report that morning about their mission trip. As I walked down the hall I encouraged people to go. I spoke to one man and tried to encourage him. He looked at me and said, "No! Why don't they help people right here in Youngstown? We should take care of our own!" I said, "You are in luck! Next year, we are welcoming 400 people to Youngstown to help our own (with Workcamps). How would you like to help?" He said, "No way! They are lazy and don't deserve our help!" In other words, he was saying, "Don't bother!"

We have no shortage of dark beliefs in our society. Sometime they are rooted in some dark theology. Sometimes our dark beliefs are rooted in overexposure to the darkness. At this very moment 24/7 news is on the air. They just can't report enough dark stories. Global warming is causing our weather to grow more severe. The national debt is robbing our young of their future. There was another shooting in every major and minor American city. Our bridges are falling down. Our government is not effective. The world community seems to hate us and there is always another disease with no cure. Do I have to go on? Do I really have to go on? You know it is true. The heart-warming story about the puppy can't balance out all the darkness. How many people here have grown numb from all the darkness? How many people here feel like there is no hope for the future? How many people here have stopped trying to help the world?

The Apostle Paul challenged that Christian congregation in Ephesus. He is simply saying: do something for Jesus. Don't look at the world as it is. Look at the world as it could be. Our world is starving for Jesus. It isn't just true of Paul's congregation. It is true of mine. I challenge you to do something that is pleasing to Jesus! What are you going to do? If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**

If you haven't heard, last Sunday evening was the Super Bowl. Over 108.4 million Americans watched the Baltimore Ravens defeat the San Francisco Forty-niners, 34-31. The numbers were actually down from last year when 111.4 million people watched. How many of you watched the Super Bowl? How many of you watched the Super Bowl to see the game? How many of you watched the Super Bowl to see the commercials? How many of you watched the Super Bowl to see the halftime show? (Beyonce' can really shake it!) It was almost a perfect evening for the National Football League. However, there was one slight problem. There was a blackout early into the third quarter. Where were you when the lights went out? Let there be no doubt about it. The blackout is a serious matter. Some have said the city of New Orleans will never host a Super Bowl again. There has been a lot of finger pointing. With all the things that have been reported about the blackout, one story stands out to me.

They interviewed three young women who went to the game. They were in a section of the stadium that grew dark. The interviewer asked them what they did. First, they tried to stay calm. (It was good they weren't standing next to Ray Lewis.) Second, they left their seats and headed toward an exit. They didn't exit the stadium. They only stood near the exit. One of the women said, "We stood near the exit and looked out into the streets. We saw a light and decided to run toward the light if something went wrong." Have you ever run toward the light when something went wrong?

Ben Franklin wasn't wrong. Light offers security! However, what happens if the light goes out? Our generation has been entrusted with the light. We can't let it go out! We are disciples of Jesus Christ. We understand Jesus is the Light of the World. We understand it is our job to reflect that light. If the light goes out, then we will be consumed by complete darkness. If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**