

Once You Were Darkness, but Now You Are Light in the Lord

Summary of what we will learn: A Christian may be baptized as an infant and catechized his whole life long, or one may be catechized and baptized later in life as an exit from a former life in darkness to a new life of Light in Christ. In either case Christians- who are now members of Christ's body- cannot unite themselves to works of darkness. In fact, all Christians are called to shine the Light of God's Word on the works of darkness and *expose* them so there may be repentance and the healing of the Gospel.

Ephesians 5:3-14

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ **Therefore** do not become partners with them; ⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in (literally: *do not be in communion with*) 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.”

v. 3- What do the three sins have in common?

What does Paul mean by “must not even be named among you”?

Why are such sins, even naming them, improper for Saints (“Holy Persons”)?

v.4- from naming sins to something worse- joking about them. How should we use our mouths instead?

Dr. Winger: “Instead of soiling their holy mouths with ‘shamefulness and foolish talk and coarse joking’ (5:4), the Ephesians are to occupy themselves with ‘psalms and hymns and songs of the Spirit’ (5:19), ‘giving thanks’ continually in Jesus’ name to the Father (5:20). *Eucharistia* means worship, both in the liturgy and in daily life.”

v.5 – consider how each of these three nouns (and their counterparts in v.3) lead to idolatry.

Dr. Winger: “Sexual immorality leads to the worship of false gods—and vice versa. Certainly this warning should not be restricted only to the ancient practices of paganism. The present-day addiction to sexual gratification illustrates its perpetual tendency to become an idol.”

v.6- as God's Word produces faith and good works, what kind of words lead to evil and disobedience?

What is “the wrath of God” and does anyone still believe in it?

Verses 7-14 give Paul’s conclusion: “Therefore...”

The argument goes like this:

- These works of the pagans are evil and not fit for those baptized into Christ
- Because of these works the Wrath of God will come upon them (which no Christian should desire)
- Therefore, remain with Christ and do not (re)join yourselves to the pagans or their works

Paul’s alternative comes at the end of v. 11 – ***Expose them to the Light of God’s Word!***

v.7- In what sense is partnering with sons of disobedience out of line?

Dr. Winger: “This union with one another in Christ has been achieved through incorporation into his death on the cross by entering into his one body through death and resurrection with him in Holy Baptism (2:5-6, 16; 4:5). Union with one another in the church is brought about by holding something in common: Christ himself. This reality is utterly contradicted if the Gentile Ephesians return to the practices of their pagan life, as if they could partake of both. The meaning of [*do not become partakers with*] is that by joining with the pagans in their evil deeds they actually forsake their godly fellowship to become part of a different **communion**.”

Darkness and Light have no communion with each other, but Light casts it out. And just to mix metaphors, what kind of ***fruit*** does Light produce?

v. 10 – how does one “discern what is pleasing to the Lord”?

Dr. Winger: “The children of light shine a light into the dark corners of pagan life to see what scuttles out (cf 5:11: ‘expose them’). The connection of light with God’s Word implies an objective process of examination by comparing worldly deeds against the Word’s standards. In doing this the Christian participates in the wise judgment of God himself against this world’s unrighteousness (1 Cor 3:13; 2 Cor 10:18; 1 Thess 2:4). Because these evil deeds are a temptation even to Christians, the baptized must also examine themselves (1 Cor 11:28; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 6:4; cf. 2 Cor 2:9). The goal is not to find out what is useful, practical, harmless, satisfying, entertaining, or culturally relevant, but to find out what is in accord with God’s will, what is ‘pleasing to the Lord’.”

v.11- What does Paul mean by “*do not be in communion with the unfruitful works of darkness*”?

vv.11-14 Consider how Paul instructs the Church to expose evil by the Light of God’s Word.

“***Evangelism***” **must** begin with the scathing rebukes of the Law.

Paul says, “*expose them* (the unfruitful works). 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.*”

Dr. Stoeckhardt: “It is the duty of Christians, the children of light, to reprove the works of darkness, to refute the talk of the children of darkness, and prove to them that their works are evil. According to 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:9, 13; and 2:15 *elegxein* is the duty and calling of the Christian teacher and bishop. However, it is also a part of the duty and calling of all Christians, first of all to reprove the sinning brother, but then also to correct those who are without, each his neighbor.”

v. 14 appears to include either a hymn verse, poem, or liturgical chant

Dr. Stoeckhardt: “In this manner the Christian is to call to his unbelieving, ungodly neighbor: ‘You are asleep in your sins, you are slumbering in the midst of death and destruction. But awake from this sleep, arise from the dead, repent, be converted!’ This is not a mere command or demand, it is a challenge, an authoritative call, which is made effective by the last part of this sentence.”