

# Flip the Switch

## Ephesians 5:8-14

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#### A. Be the Light (vs. 8-10):

1. For you were formerly in darkness – The believers of Ephesus were continuously steadfastly aligned with the works of evil spirits and the devil because they were in a state of spiritual darkness (Eph. 2:1-2, 2 Cor. 4:4). They desired to remain faithfully engaged with the works of evil forces (Eph. 2:11-12; Romans 3:9-18).
  - a) Roman critics of all foreign religions associated Christians with immoral cults, Paul has all the more reason to wish to dissociate Christianity from cults he already regards as pagan. People could enact deeds in darkness of which they would have been ashamed in public (cf. Is 29:15; 47:10).<sup>1</sup>
  - b) Putting off the old man and putting on the new man (Eph. 4:20-24) is a concerted effort that involves not being around people who can take you back to your old self. We can become dark over again, Judas.
2. Now you are light in the Lord - Presently, those who are saved through faith (Eph. 2:8-10) are provided the ability (Eph. 1:3-4) to understand the proclamation of the Gospel, progressively mature to understand the true meaning of God's Word for the purpose of being transformed to become "sons of light." (Luke 16:8). The Word of God then becomes a "lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path." (Psalm 119:105).
  - a) Already in the OT, light can stand for the life of God and the salvation that comes from God (e.g., Ps 27:1; Isa 9:2; 10:17; 42:6, 16; 49:6; 51:4; 60:1), while darkness stands for death, Sheol, and God's judgment (e.g., Ps 49:19; Isa 5:30; 9:2; 47:5; 59:9; 60:2). In the Qumran literature, of course, this imagery is frequent and depicts two ways of life in relationship to God, not only in 1QM with its "War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness" (cf. 1.1–16; 3.6, 9; 13.16; 14.17) but also in 1QS 1.9, 10; 3.13, 19–21, 24, 25 (cf. K. G. Kuhn, "The Epistle to the Ephesians," esp. 122–24). A similar ethical dualism of light and darkness is found in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* ("Choose for yourselves light or darkness, the law of the Lord or the works of Beliar," *T. Levi* 19.1; cf. also 14.4; *T. Benj.* 5.3). In the NT, the Johannine writings make particular use of this imagery (cf. 1:4, 5, 7–9; 3:19–21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35, 36, 46; 1 John 1:5; 2:8), while in Paul it occurs in 1 Thess 5:5; 2 Cor 4:4, 6; 6:14; Rom 13:12, 13 and Col 1:12, 13.<sup>2</sup>
3. Now you are light in the Lord - No one can come to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ unless the Lord draws us to Himself (John 6:44). When this takes place and we allow Christ to become the dominating authority of our lives we are transformed by the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. This transformation is from darkness to light and is the focus of this passage.
  - a)      Note the fluidity with which the symbolic language of 'light' and 'darkness' is used here: essentially it streams from Christ (14b) as transforming divine life—life which can be said to produce the *fruit* of truth

<sup>1</sup> Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Eph 5:8–13). InterVarsity Press.

<sup>2</sup> Lincoln, A. T. (1990). *Ephesians* (Vol. 42, pp. 326–327). Word, Incorporated.

and holiness (9; cf. Gal. 5:22–23). But the people transformed by it can also be called *light* (8), and their activities (when they truly correspond to the new-creation humanity) are also light in that they expose the Gentile standards as belonging to *darkness* (11, 13).<sup>3</sup>

4. Walk as children of Light - Because moving from darkness to light is emphasized in this verse, we must make it a habit to develop a lifestyle that ‘displays the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit’ by practicing daily submission to the authority of scripture (Eph. 5:15-18).
  - a) We should be such light we expose darkness. Our character and lifestyle decisions become a testimony for the glory of God.
  - b) It takes us to develop a lifestyle shaped by our obedience to the Word of God to walk in the light (1 John 1:5-7). Paul talks about walking several times in Ephesians:
    - *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”* (Eph 2:10; NASU)
    - *“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.: (Eph 4:1-4; NASU)*
    - *“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart....”* (Eph 4:17-18; NASU)
    - *“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”* (Eph 5:1-2; NASU)
    - *“Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light 9 (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”* (Eph 5:7-11; NASU)
    - *“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”* (Eph 5:15-17; NASU)
  - c) How we walk as children (Matthew 18:3-4).
5. The fruit of the light - Fruit represents our spiritual character based on the work of the vinedresser and the vine (Christ) in our lives (John 15:1-13; Eph. 3:16-19). Light describes our spiritual transformation. Once saved, from a desire to do evil (Eph. 2:1-2; darkness), the Spirit of God empowers us with the ability to understand and apply the Word of God. So, when we demonstrate the fruit light, it means our character has been transformed into the nature of Christ (2 Peter 1:3-4) based on the influence of the Holy Spirit so that we manifest the fruit of the Spirit and develop a clear understanding of how to apply the Word of God to the day-to-day issues we encounter. It is an outward (light) expression of the inward transformational work of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 2:20).
6. The fruit of the light - When the “vinedresser” (John 15:1) prunes us to bear much fruit (John 15:2-5), we become loved by God (John 15:7-10; He disciplines those who He loves – pruning Hebrews 12:4-11), a friend of Christ (John 15:13), and salt and light to the world (Matthew 5:13-17).

<sup>3</sup> Turner, M. (1994). [Ephesians](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., pp. 1240–1241). Inter-Varsity Press.

7. Consist of all goodness and righteousness and truth - When we develop into the 'fruit of the light,' the Holy Spirit influences us to look out for the welfare of others (Phil. 2:1-5), as we commit to conform their lives to the divine standards of God. While visibly living out these principles daily, our maturation brings God glory.
  - a) "In all goodness," which means kindness; "righteousness," meaning moral rectitude; and "truth," referring primarily to sincerity and genuineness. The believer is to prove or test his life in this manner to see if he is in the will of God and therefore well-pleasing to Him. McGee, J. V. (1991). *Thru the Bible commentary: The Epistles (Ephesians)* (electronic ed., Vol. 47, p. 141). Thomas Nelson.
8. Trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord -When "we walk in the light and He is in the light..." (1 John 1:5-7), we are constantly seeking the Lord's approval for everything we are desire to accomplish as we continuously submit to the obedience of His divine standards. Paul addresses this after explaining how we must live before God when he writes, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." (Colossians 3:17)
  - a) To prove is to ascertain by test and experiment. Our whole walk should be directed to finding out what things are pleasing to Christ, rejecting at once everything that is not so, and clinging to all that is. We are not to follow the tradition of our people, and not to take a vague view of duty; we are to prove the matter, to put it to the test. For the supreme practical rule of the Christian's life must be to please Christ.<sup>4</sup>
9. Trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord - Being transformed from darkness to light is to be a brand new creation; it's a whole new life to learn - going from the old man to the new man (Ephesians 4:20-23). The learning process requires a willingness to renew our minds (Romans 12:2) and focus on "presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice." (Romans 12:1) each day (Romans 6:12-14). This attitude continuously generates a need to reverence the Lord as we live each day. This is a constant transformation from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity so that we "walk in the light as He is in the light." (1 John 1:5-7)

## B. No Secrets (vs. 11-12):

1. Do not participate in unfruitful deeds - Because our commitment is now to habitually walk in the light because we 'are children of the light,' persistently learning to please the Lord each day, we must not allow ourselves to continuously associate or share in exercising any energy or time to various efforts that are not in line with the work of the Holy Spirit.
  - a) But rather rebuke. If a Christian is in fellowship with his Lord, his very life will be a reproof to the world.<sup>5</sup>
  - b) Fellowship" is *sunkoinōneō* (συνκοινωνεω), "to become a partaker together with others." The word refers to a joint-participation between two or more individuals in a common interest and a common activity. "Reprove" is *elegchō* (ἐλεγχω), "to reprove or rebuke so as to bring out conviction or confession of guilt." Trench says that the word "implies not merely the charge, but the truth of the charge, and further the manifestation of the truth of the charge; nay, more than all this, very often also the acknowledgment, if not outward, yet inward, of its truth on the part of the accused; it being the glorious prerogative of the truth in its highest operation not merely to assert itself, and to silence the adversary, but to silence him by convincing him of his error."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). *Ephesians* (p. 209). Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>5</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F., eds. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Eph 5:8-11). Moody Press.

<sup>6</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 4, p. 124). Eerdmans.

2. Do not participate in unfruitful deeds of darkness – When we engage in different efforts or old friends (1 Cor. 15:33) that are presentative of our past, this can corrupt us (Eph. 4:17-20; 26-32) causing us to go back to our old way of living (Eph. 3-6; Paul is talking to believers) rather than being wise which shapes us to become drunk with the Spirit (Eph. 5:15-20).
  - a) The reason (gar, for) believers should not be partners with the unregenerate is that Christians are no longer part of the darkness in which they used to live (cf. 4:18; John 1:5; 3:19–20) but ... are light in the Lord (Matt. 5:14–16; John 3:21; 8:12; Rom. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:4–5). They have been rescued out of darkness (Col. 1:13). Now, being “in the Lord,” who is the Light (John 8:12), they too are lights. Hoehner, H. W. (1985). *Ephesians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 638). Victor Books.
  - b) Sinners, those in darkness, are characterized by the opposite of this fruit: evil, wickedness, and falsehood. The thought in verse 10 expands on verse 8b in that to live as children of light one must discern what pleases the Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10). The words find out translate *dokimazontes*, which is literally, “putting to the test,” “approving,” or “discerning” (cf. Rom. 12:2).<sup>7</sup>
3. But instead expose them – Because we are committed to walking in the light, we must be willing to continuously be open to examining our lives and submit to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
  - a) Paul admonished the believers to walk in the light, a metaphor for a life of holiness. While spiritual darkness is the realm of unbelievers, light is the realm of Christians (Col. 1:12–13; John 8:12; 12:35). Believers “expose” the things of darkness (5:11) by living differently (4:17–24), walking with God (1 John 1:7), being a light (Matt. 5:14–16), and rebuking sin (2 Tim. 3:16). Paul’s quotes in Ephesians 5:14 were probably taken from Isaiah 26:19 and 60:1. This verse contains a sample of how one might reprove a sinner.<sup>8</sup>
4. Disgraceful even to speak of the things – The main point here is that it’s not unacceptable to continuously verbally communicate any reference to actions that are a part of the sinful life we once lived.
5. Done by them in secret – It is especially important not to continuously engage in activities that are purposefully structured to be concealed or covered up, so no one knows what took place.
  - a) The secrecy of the works in question is the reason why they require to be openly reprovved; and the point is this—the heathen practice in secret, vices too abominable even to mention; all the more is the need open rebuke instead of silent overlooking or connivance (Meyer, Ellicott, etc.).<sup>9</sup>
6. Judas secretly operated and brought darkness into his life.

## C. Keep All the Lights On (vs. 13):

1. All things become visible – What was done in darkness will be continuously exposed in God’s divine light in His time. This is the main reason why there is no point in participating in secret acts that we believe we can cover up (Luke 8:17).

<sup>7</sup> Hoehner, H. W. (1985). [Ephesians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 638). Victor Books.

<sup>8</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (p. 595). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>9</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 4, p. 125). Eerdmans.

- a) All things” is ta panta (τὰ πάντα), “the all things,” that is, the secret sins just mentioned, the Greek article pointing back to these. “That are reprov’d” is a present participle in the Greek text, “being reprov’d,” or “when they are reprov’d.” “Made manifest” is phaneroō (φανερώω), “to make visible or known what has been hidden or unknown.” “Doth make manifest” is passive voice in Greek text, “is made manifest.” Thus, “everything that is made manifest is light.” Vincent comments: “A general proposition, going to show that manifestation can come only through light. Whatever is revealed in its true essence by light is of the nature of light. It no longer belongs to the category of darkness. Manifestation is a law of good and evil alike. That which is of the truth seeks the light and cometh to the light. That which is evil avoids the light - Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 4, p. 125). Eerdmans.
2. Exposed by the light – When the Spirit of God reveals whether in heaven or on earth, what was designed to be concealed, it would be irrefutably established, outwardly and inwardly, and acknowledgeable to all involved what the truth is. Everyone would have a clear understanding of what took place.
- a) As, for instance, when our Lord reprov’d the hypocrisy of the Pharisees—their practices had not seemed to the disciples very evil before, but when Christ threw on them the pure light of truth, they were made manifest in their true character—they appeared and they still appear, odious. A just reproof places evil in a light that shows its true character. For everything which is made manifest is light. Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). *Ephesians* (p. 209). Funk & Wagnalls Company.
3. Everything that becomes visible is light – Everything that is exposed by divine revelation has absolutely no way of being concealed ever again. This is because the light is unquenchable and based on the righteousness of God (done by the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God), who is omnipresent and omniscient.
4. For this reason speak – Because the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17), exposes all things we can continuously boldly communicate a message from the Lord God.
5. Awake sleeper – The message is for all who may have come to the light but are now in a lame, lukewarm walk with the Lord, an insensibility to the Lord’s Word while conforming to the ways of the world. These believers must continuously stop living in a carnal indifferent manner described in Eph. 4:17-5:6. We must speak this with authority.
- a) The essence of this passage is to admonish believers to be morally vigilant and deal with the problem of sin, receiving the grace of Christ to help them in their struggle.<sup>10</sup>
- b) It takes the form of an appeal to wake out of the pagan condition of sin, described by the two-fold figure of *sleep* and *death*, and of a promise that then Christ will shine upon the sinner with the saving light of His truth.  
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6. Rise from the dead – We are commanded to make up our minds and craft the initiative to stop living based on our feelings and our way of thinking, practicing the nature of our old selves, and go back to walking under the influence of the Holy Spirit who poured into us at the point of salvation (Eph. 1:3-4).
- a) But the fundamental idea in the prophecy is, that when the Church gets the light of heaven, she is not to lie still, as if she were asleep or dead, but is to be active, is to make use of the light, is to use it for illuminating the world. The apostle maintains that the Ephesian Church had got the light of heaven; she, therefore, was not to sleep or loiter, but spring forth as if from the grave, and pour light on the world. The changes which

<sup>10</sup> Arnold, C. E. (2002). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*. (Vol. 3, pp. 330–331). Zondervan.

<sup>11</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 4, pp. 125–126). Eerdmans.

the apostle makes on the form of the prophecy are remarkable, and show that it was to its spirit and substance rather than to its precise form and letter that he attached the authority of inspiration.<sup>12</sup>

7. And Christ will shine on you - When we willfully, habitually make the decision to stop succumbing to the influences of the flesh, Christ, our anointed High priest, will immediately convict us, illuminate the Word of God so that it penetrates our hearts (Eph. 4:16-19), continue the workmanship He began (Eph. 2:8-10; Phil. 1:6) and keep stimulating us to spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:12-13, 16; 5:15-18).
8. And Christ will shine on you – Christ’s spiritual influence once again empowers us to “be imitators of God, as beloved children and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us....” (Eph. 5:1-2; 4:1).

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<sup>12</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [\*Ephesians\*](#) (p. 210). Funk & Wagnalls Company.