

## Ephesians 5:8-16

**8 For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. [So...] Live as children of light— 9 for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.**

\*\*12. What is “darkness” in this context? What is the best way to get rid of darkness?

Corrie ten Boom, holocaust survivor, wrote, “Only 20% of us came out alive. And when I was free I knew I had work to do. Betsie [her sister] would say to me, ‘Corrie, we must go all over the world because we have a message from experience that the LIGHT of JESUS Christ is STRONGER than the DEEPEST DARKNESS!’ Together, with Jesus, I am stronger than the devil. We stand on victory ground because Jesus is Victor!”

The symbolism of the juxtaposition of light and darkness is a frequent one in the New Testament. Here are three examples:

John 8:12

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

1 Peter 2:9

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.*

1 John 1:5-7

*This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.*

The light/darkness dichotomy was a major theme in Gnosticism, a philosophy which was becoming quite popular by the time John wrote his letters.

\***“Fruit of the light”** is a checklist for action. Before we speak or act, we should ask: Is it good? Is it right? Is it true?

**10 Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.** (NLT: “Carefully determine...”)

The Greek word is “discern”. Discernment is the responsibility of every Christian and it grows with Christian maturity. It is “thinking biblically”.

\*\*13. Jesus said (Matthew 7:1 ff) that we are not to judge. How is discernment different?

Again, this is a frequent theme in the New Testament. For example....

1Thessalonians 5:21-22

*But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.*

1 John 4:1

*Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

The point of our discernment is to determine what is “*pleasing to the Lord.*”

Paul wrote a similar thing in Romans 12:2....

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

However, we must go beyond just determining what God’s will is, we must do it! That is what the prophet Micah (6:8) said (and a good verse to commit to memory):

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

But we must properly understand this verse. Newton, the hymn writer and the pastor, commenting on this, said, “There is hardly any one passage in [Scripture] more generally misunderstood.” Why would John Newton says that?

Here is Alistair Begg’s response:

- 1) Because this verse is attempted without the gospel, which makes it then just a display of natural virtue. It’s just another version of “A good God, if he exists, will reward nice people if they do their best.”
- 2) It is sometimes proclaimed in place of the gospel. Men and women by nature are keen to contribute to their standing before God on account of their own endeavors. And so, if the message that comes across is “Why don’t you go out and have a really good week and do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God?” they say, “I’d be able to take a stab at that.”
- 3) It needs to be understood that it is only possible by the gospel. Micah is not here charting a path as a means to acceptance with God. If God were to judge us by this text, we would have no basis for appeal. None of us fully succeed in the area of justice and kindness and humility.

So what is the answer? The answer is not in our righteous acts but in “the righteous acts of the Lord” (Micah 6:5) Verse 8 then says, “He has shown you what is good.” Jesus is good! When Newton preached on this passage, he entitled his sermon on this verse “No Access to God but by the Gospel of Christ.”

**<sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.**

We are to be active, not just passive in our approach to evil.

\*\*14. How are we to “expose them” in a way that would be “speaking the truth in love”?

One way is through what we say. Go back to 1 Peter 2:9

*“...declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*

Remember the laundry detergent commercial that showed two stacks of laundry? One looked white until it is put next to one that really was. That is one way to expose “works of darkness.”

\*\*15. What would the difference be between our response to those inside versus outside the family of God?

**<sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly;**

The ancient “Persian rule” was that it was not permitted to talk about things it is not permitted to do.

\*\*16. Why do you think Paul would say this?

Here is one example to start you thinking: Suppose I went to an OA (Overeaters Anonymous) meeting and described the dinner I had last night: a thick, juicy steak, baked potato topped with melting butter, sour cream, cheese, and crumbled bacon, asparagus with hollandaise sauce, for dessert large piece of apple pie a la mode. Undoubtedly, I would not be welcome!

**<sup>13</sup> but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”**

Was this an early Christian song? Or, perhaps based on Isaiah 60:1-3  
*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.*

<sup>2</sup> *See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you.*

<sup>3</sup> *Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

Wake up! Understand what is going on!

\*\*17. It has been said that many Christians today are asleep! What are some ways or issues where this might be the case?

**<sup>15</sup> Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise,**

The word “live” is literally “walk.” So the question for us is, “Does your walk match your talk?”

The Greek here is literally.... “See that you walk circumspectly” (akribos = circumspectly, diligently, perfectly)

Jesus said, *Be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves.* (Matthew 10:16, Phillips)

\*\*18. What are some reasons we need to be walk wisely?

In Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Pilgrim discovered that if he watched his step and walked carefully, always keeping his eye on the path, the lions that threatened him could not reach him.

Peter was saying essentially the same thing when he wrote, (1 Peter 5:8-9a)

*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...*

Remember the source of wisdom! *If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.* (James 1:5)

**<sup>16</sup> making the most of the time, because the days are evil.**

This time, the positive is first and then the negative. Some versions say “redeeming the time”. This is perhaps truer to the original Greek which means to ransom or rescue from loss.

Ephesians 5B Study, 5:8-16

**\*\*19.** What are some ways we can “make the most of the time” (or rescue it from loss)? How does the fact that “the days are evil” heighten that necessity?