

Children of Light or Darkness

Ephesians 5:7 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 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.**"
(Eph 5:7-14)

Dark and Light

JOHN BEGINS HIS GOSPEL with reflections on **Genesis 1**. “**In the beginning...**” (**John 1:1**). His aim is to tell us about Jesus, through whom all things were made and without him was not anything made that was made (**3**). Then, thinking in some way about the first day of **creation** he says, “**In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines**

in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (4-5).
Darkness and light.

Similarly, when Jesus’ ministry began, Matthew tells us, “And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: *‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned’* (Isa 42:7)” (Matt 4:13-16). The quotation comes from Isaiah and uses the very same images of light and darkness.

Given their prominence in Genesis, Isaiah, Matthew, and John (among many others) and given that they are in the first and last chapters of the Bible, it may be no exaggeration to say that light and darkness are “the” main metaphors of the entire Bible. To created things, darkness usually comes before light. The earth was first dark (Gen 1:2), then God created light (1:3); the people dwelling in darkness later see the light. Why might this be?

What is darkness? Most simply, it is a negative, an absence. Darkness is the absence of light. Metaphorically, it is

a universally negative idea depicting ignorance, folly, falsehood, evil, sin, death, and more.¹ **Light**, on the other hand, is this incredibly complicated physical (is it a wave or a particle?) and spiritual reality, complicated probably because it represents the most unfathomable thing in all the universe: God. “**God is light, and in him is no darkness at all**” (1Jn 1:5). But in this way, light is always seen throughout Scripture as a profoundly good thing.²

Unfolding a theme begun in Chapter 4, Paul now turns his explanation on how to take off the old man and put on the new man to this metaphor of darkness and light. Previously he had said, “[Gentiles] are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart” (Eph 4:18). Now we are going to see more of what this means.

The Passage

The unit of thought is **Ephesians 5:7-14**. It begins, as the previous unit did, with “therefore” (7), and continues the theme of “**walking**” that we looked at last time (8). But it

¹ See **Leland Ryken** et al., “Darkness,” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 191-93.

² *Ibid.*, “Light.”

sharply **contrasts** with the previous unit. Whereas in **5:1** we are to “**become**” (ESV: “be;” *ginesthe*) **imitators of God**; now you are **not to “become”** (*ginesthe*) **partners with “them”** (7). God vs. them. “Them” is **the Gentiles** who walk around in darkness mentioned previously. Light vs. Darkness.

But it isn’t “them” as if you can go around blaming “those people,” as if darkness is what everyone *else* is in except you, as if this gives you a reason to brag and boast about being enlightened. No. Rather, “**As one time you were darkness**” (8). This is where “darkness” is introduced, and the counterpart of “light” comes in the next phrase. “**But now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light**” (8).

Light and darkness **bookend** our passage, with the same words coming again at the end where things are “**exposed by the light**” (13-14a) and the **dead** (another way of talking about darkness) are commanded to arise and Christ will “**shine**” on you (14b). In the middle, you have “**the fruit of light**” (9) corresponding to the “**unfruitful works of darkness**” (11). And the middle thus becomes learning to “**discern what is pleasing to the Lord**” (10).³

³ **John Paul Heil**, *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 217. Another idea is that 7-20 are a unit and that vs. 13-14 is the middle. This would be the Isaiah quote. See “Literary Structure (Chiasm, Chiasmus)

- A. Darkness and Light (Eph 5:7-8)
- B. Fruit of Light (9)
- C. Discern what is Pleasing to the Lord (10)
- B¹. Unfruitful Works of Darkness (11-12)
- A¹. Light Exposes or Raises the Dead (13-14)

Remembering the Darkness

The idea that “at one time you were darkness” is both new and not new. It is not new in that it returns us to **Eph 2:1-3** when you were “dead in our trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience--among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (**Eph 2:2-3**). The dark penetrating evil of the devil and the paganism he holds people in bondage to is at one in the same time full of passion (so people love it) yet dark as oil (so people do not understand its evil). You may recall I referred to this as being like

of Epistle to the Ephesians,” http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/49_Ephesians_pericope_e.html. Though interesting, I would use this only to point out the significance of the quotation.

a **zombie**. This is what he refers to when he says you were darkness.

And yet he puts it a very strange way. “**You *were* darkness**” rather than “**you were *in* darkness.**” Scripture constantly speaks of those who “**walk in darkness**” after the way of the fallen sons of God (**Ps 82:5**). Those “**who forsake the paths of uprightness ... walk in the ways of darkness**” (**Prov 2:12-13**); “**The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble**” (**Prov 4:19**); and **introducing the theme of wisdom and folly for the next unit**, “**The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness**” (**Eccl 2:14**).

But Paul does not refer in this first mention of darkness to walking so much as to a nature, the essence of what we were. It refers to the state a person is in prior to conversion (**Calvin, Fergusson, Hemmingsen**). Aquinas says, “**When sin dominates a man the entire person is referred to as sin and darkness**” (**Thomas Aquinas, Ephesians Ch. 5 Lecture 4**). When you are **unconverted**, you *are* darkness, you exude darkness, you ooze darkness, it seeps out of you like damp from cold dark cave. How deeply ironic and terrifying it is, then, when people “parade” their sin in such a public man-

ner that they take “pride” in it, even naming themselves after it (see **Eph 5:3**), thereby allying themselves with dark powers. Wolfgang Musculus summarizes it well,

What was it other than the densest darkness when their minds and hearts were clouded over and they walked in complete blindness? Is it not also darkness today, when people who do not have the words of God do not see with what darkness they are oppressed when they call on creatures instead of the Creator and deaf and dumb idols instead of God in their troubles, and worship them?

(**Wolfgang Musculus**, *Commentary on Ephesians*)

Now You Are Light

The opposite of this is that “**now you are light in the Lord**” (**Eph 5:8**). This remarkable statement is followed immediately by a phrase, “**children of light,**” which is where he talks more about **walking**. To explain this, I want to go to the last verse of our passage. It is a quotation that comes from Isaiah. It is one of the trickiest quotations in the NT to figure out, because it is a composite of more than one verse,

and Paul takes some pretty serious liberties with them.⁴ One of those verses is **Isaiah 60:2**. Throughout the entire section, Paul has primarily two parts of Isaiah in mind.

Theme	Isaiah	Ephesians
“dead”	26:19	5:14
resurrection	26:19	5:14
“awake”	26:19	5:14
“walk”	59:9	5:2, 8, 15
Spirit’s indwelling	59:21	4:30; 5:18; etc.
children	59:21	5:8
“words” or instructions	59:21	4:25-6:20
“light”	60:1	5:8, 9, 13, 14
“shine”	60:1	5:8, 14
“darkness”	60:2	5:8, 11
“LORD”	60:1-2	5:14 [“Christ”]
“helmet of salvation”	59:17	6:17
“breastplate”	59:17	6:14

Just two verses prior to this Paul says, “**And as for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the LORD: ‘My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of**

⁴ That Paul is actually quoting Scripture and not some early Christian hymn see **Jonathan M. Lunde**, “Paul’s Creative And Contextual Use Of Isaiah In Ephesians 5:14,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55:1 (2012): 87-110.

your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,' says the LORD, 'from this time forth and forevermore'" (Isa 59:21).

It is by this Holy Spirit that we are adopted and sealed in Ephesians. This is how we become children of God, which is the new covenant promise given here (see Rom 11:26-27), for he is not talking about biological children in this passage, because the promise is that the Holy Spirit is upon us and God's words are in our mouths, you don't get that just by being born into a Christian family.⁵ You get it by being born again. "Because of this [Christians] themselves would radiate light from within."⁶ Hence, you are said not merely to walk in light, but to *be* light.

In the same way that others *are* darkness, *you are* light. You exude light, you ooze light, you shine light! Is this something you are told often? Do you think of yourself as light? Do we think about each other in church as light? Why is this something we do not talk about more often? Do we believe it? Can it even be true?

But how is this possible? If God is light, and the Holy Spirit is God, then the Holy Spirit is Light, which is why he

⁵ The same is true of children of darkness that we saw earlier are not biological, but spiritual and they include Jews.

⁶ Lunde, 102.

is the Shekinah Glory of the OT. If the Spirit is in you and you are in **Christ**, who is also Light, then you are that very light by virtue of the mystical union. Thus, in again giving us doctrine with the ethics, he establishes why you are to “**walk as children of light.**” It is because you are light. Therefore, **walk as you are.** When you do, the whole world will not be able to help but take notice!

What a remarkable thing it is to reflect upon these two opposite truths. Unbelievers are not merely in darkness, they *are* darkness itself. Christians are not merely in the light, they *are* light in the Lord. Thus, our activities either resonate with our being or contradict it. As God is a God of truth and not contradiction, he has commanded you to walk as you are in the light.

Fruit and Unfruit

Now, **walking in light** means that you walk in “**the fruit of light.**” **Fruit** is a favorite metaphor of Paul’s when talking about the Holy Spirit. “**The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law**” (**Gal 5:22-23**), he tells the Galatian Christians. It is interesting that in

Isaiah 59:21, the prophet talks about the “**Spirit**” coming upon the children. In the next verse, these children are described as “**shining**” (**Isa 60:1**). But in 59:21, the Spirit puts Yahweh’s “**words**” in their mouth, it will not depart. “Words” (*debar*) is a common enough Hebrew word. But it seems, especially given Paul’s use of this part of Isaiah, that it means what it does in the 28 times it is used in Psalm 119—God’s commands or precepts or laws.

Here, he summarizes that fruit differently. “**The fruit of light is found in all that is good (*agathōsunē*) and right (*dikaiosunē*) and true (*aletheia*)**” (**Eph 5:9**). Let’s begin thinking about this by noticing something important. Christ, who is called the Light, is also given all of these titles. **Jerome** said, “**Christ himself is rightly called goodness, righteousness and truth. He is goodness in that he gives grace to those who believe in him, not according to their works but according to his mercy. He is himself righteousness in that he gives to each what he deserves. He is himself truth in that he is the one who knows the causes of all creatures and all things**” (*Epistle to the Ephesians 3.5.9*). This grounds the terms not in some abstract philosophical concepts, but in the very person of God our Savior. The fruit is what it is because Christ is who he is.

Rather than a list of virtues as in Galatians, these describe [what those virtues are](#). That's a lot like describing what we are (darkness or light). Each of these words are found (in one form or another) repeatedly in Psalm 119 LXX. In [Romans 7:12](#), he has virtually the same list describing the commandment. “[So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy \(*hagios*\) and righteous \(*dikaios*\) and good \(*agathos*\).](#)”

Why would he do this? Perhaps it is because there are all kinds of people out there who want to call the sins they commit good and demean the law of God as evil, wrong, and false. This is basically how our present culture has come to view both their own actions and the biblical laws of God.

But this is nothing new. It is interesting to think about this in light of the [Garden of Eden](#) and its “fruit.” Eve saw that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was “good” for food, was a “delight” to the eyes, and it was to be desired to make one “wise.” But of course, this fruit was [forbidden](#). And it was the serpent who made her question the goodness, rightness, and truthfulness of God's law.

But Psalm 19, which reflects upon this story, tells us the truth. “[The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlighten-](#)

ing the eyes ... the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether” (Ps 19:8-9). They are to be “desired” more than gold or honey (10). This is what Paul is trying to get at in speaking of the “fruit of light.” When you obey God, this fruit actually produces light in a person, causing them to shine brighter than the stars of heaven. Do not hide your light under a bush, but let it shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matt 5:16).

We also know this about the fruit by contrasting it with “unfruitful works of darkness” (11). Again, he gives two ways: fruitful works of truth and light or unfruitful works of darkness. To be unfruitful is to be barren. Sometimes it is likened to being dead. Jesus says, “Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away” (John 15:2). To not bear fruit is to be unfruitful. This means that you are not doing what God commands throughout this long list in Ephesians or elsewhere. It means you have no desire to.

But lest you think this is merely the absence of good fruit and that people in darkness are really just neutral, he explains “It is shameful to even speak of the things that they do in secret” (Eph 5:12). Doing things in secret sometimes means doing them at night. When people should be sleeping

(generally speaking), they are off doing secret, hidden, shameful things. Night is another way of talking about darkness.

There is a contrast here between “speaking” of these kinds of things and “naming” them in Eph 5:3. There, we saw that he was talking about all kinds of sexual impurity as well as uncleanness that comes from the mouth. Of course, there are many other kinds of things this includes as well: Murder, rage, envy, sloth, malice, talking back to parents, theft, sins against God, sins against neighbor, sins you commit deliberately, sins you don’t even realize you are committing, sins you do, sins you commit because you leave things undone.

But it is also possible that he especially has in mind here very dark things that were going on in pagan rituals. Some have argued that he may be talking about gnostic mystery cults.⁷ Others think perhaps it was rituals worshipping the goddess, as we looked at last time.⁸ In these drunken orgies of lust and filth, few can imagine the things taking place. They included at the very least obscene sexual language and

⁷ Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser: Ein Kommentar* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 2nd edn, 1958), p. 239. Cited in Kreitzer (below), 55.

⁸ Larry J. Kreitzer, “‘Crude Language’ and ‘Shameful Things Done in Secret’ (Ephesians 5.4, 12): Allusions to the Cult of Demeter/Cybele in Hierapolis?” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 71 (1998): 51-77.

dressing up in women's clothing.⁹ It was obviously much worse. Scripture tells us it has included human sacrifice.¹⁰ This things happened. They are happening. They will happen. It is a dark world.

One of the great secret evils of our day in the good ol' USA is the rapidly increasing human-trafficking.¹¹ Americans are the #1 consumers of this world-wide. \$32 billion a year. Children are being kidnapped everywhere, everyday. They are sold into a lifetime of slavery, sexual abuse, often even death. This is something people do not talk about. Because it is shameful to even speak of these things. But should you be surprised in a nation that has murdered 60,000,000

⁹ **Josephus**, *Antiquities* 19.29-30, cited in Kreitzer, 68-69.

¹⁰ A very strange piece aired on *TMZ* that gives you just a taste of this in modern times, former Scorpions bassist **Ralph Rickermann** was asked about going to "snuff" or "fetish" parties. His response floored everyone. "I don't go to fetish parties. I went to one, one time. I seen really bad ***. I think they actually killed people there and stuff. They pay up to 100k to see people get [executed]. I'm not kidding." The piece shows the "reporters" back in the office laughing hysterically. Meanwhile, Rickermann is dead serious. "Scorpions Bassist: Yeah, about those Snuff Parties I went to..." *TMZ* (April 21, 2012), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JiQAzZ0tzM>. See also "Demons Manifesting Through Celebrities Caught on Camera," on the now demonetized channel *Shattered Paradise* (Mar 13, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEd-xZ4M0oY&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR247TqEZHMDreKrczNYd4AdflD4n4x2v5JGYGUMhWS-DOA-IDhVyIbwYCFI>.

¹¹ See **John W. Whitehead**, "The Essence of Evil: Sex with Children Has Become Big Business in America," *The Rutherford Institute* (April 23, 2019), https://www.rutherford.org/publications_resources/john_whiteheads_commentary/the_essence_of_evil_sex_with_children_has_become_big_business_in_america?fbclid=IwAR2XGZOBTUdE4pVBBRL-nuhrMZdrxbzyhbpKVtXMGlaxFz9gzv18FvTleFVM; "NFL Coach Takes On Human Trafficking," *The 700 Club* (Dec 11, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jv4OqVpdkL0>.

babies in the dark secret corners of abortion clinics where no one is allowed to see what goes on?

Do we really need to get down and dirty, thinking about the darkest deeds of the wicked? Sometimes we do. Paul says it is shameful to even speak about them, and it is. Much of it is unimaginable, yet it is someone like your next-door neighbor who is doing it in secret. But this is precisely why it needs to be talked about. Sometimes I wonder if we are even capable of being shocked any more. I think we are. But it takes a lot. The point is, the unfruitful works of darkness are so much more than unfruitful. They are unspeakably evil.

What he says after this is that “when anything is exposed to by the light, it becomes visible” (Eph 5:13). To expose something, it must be seen. Once it is seen, it becomes known for what it is. To talk about these things is to shine light on them. To go into secret places and take videos at the cost of your own freedom or life so that the world might see what is happening is to expose them. To have repented of them and then talk about that with others is to lay it bare to the light. To confess to someone else what you are doing in secret is to expose it. It is the darkness that these sins love. They do not want to be found out, they do not want to be

seen for when they are, because then they lose their power. That is the way darkness works. It is dispelled quickly by light but encroaches just as quickly when the light is snuffed out.

After telling us that anything exposed to the light becomes visible, he adds, “Anything that becomes visible is light” (14a). This is a difficult idea to understand. That which just became visible was shameful wicked sin. Is he saying that sin somehow becomes good just by talking about it? This actually seems to be the thinking of the world right now, especially with particular sins that are being paraded and politicized by certain groups that identify as their sins.

But this isn't at all what is being said. Something does not become good just because you mention it out loud or just because a whole culture starts to to change its mind on it. The Reformer Erasmus Sarcerius gives the proper meaning.

Every work of darkness that is exposed and confessed, as happens by the preaching of repentance, begins later on to become light in those who repent and thus a work of light. Likewise everyone who is convicted of his works of darkness by the preaching of repentance recognizes that they are

works of darkness and therefore sins, and repents of them, afterward becomes light, that is to say, he is enlightened and shown the need for works of light and so does works of light instead of works of darkness.

(Erasmus Sarcerius, *Annotations on Ephesians*)

This is why it is so important to **confess your sins**. Only then can you repent of them. “**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**” (1Jn 1:9). In the cleansing, we become washed. In the washing we begin to shine. Not our sins, but we ourselves. That was what Isaiah said.

That also leads us to the final part of our text. This is the two-fold poetic re-appropriation of Isaiah. “**Therefore it says, ‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you’**” (Eph 5:14b). The common interpretation of this is that Paul is quoting an early Christian hymn. Clinton Arnold represents this view:

The best interpretation is that Paul is here citing an early Christian hymn, which in turn had been deeply influenced by a Christological interpretation of the two passages from Isaiah. The fact that Paul is citing a hymn from the worship

of the early church is the consensus view and has had a long history in the interpretation of this passage.¹²

A form of this has been popular since at least **the Reformation**. One Reformer said, Calvin said, “Interpreters have struggled to find the biblical passage that Paul apparently quotes in this verse, but there is none” (He personally believed Paul was alluding to **Isaiah 60:1**). Yet, Paul says, “**Therefore it says...**” which has to mean what is coming is a *biblical* quotation. To get out of this problem, another Reformer said, “**This quotation is not found in the Scriptures. It appears that Paul was speaking in the manner of the prophets, who said, “Thus says the Lord”**” (**Johannes Bugenhagen**, *Annotations on Ephesians*). Yet, good work has been done on this recently that in my mind definitively demonstrates that Paul is actually taking two passages from Isaiah and merging them together in his own creative (poetic) way to make a vital point.

The passages as we have seen are **Isaiah 26:19** and **60:1-2**.¹³ Here they are side by side:

¹² **Clinton Arnold**, *Ephesians* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010) 334.

¹³ See **Lunde**, “Paul’s Creative and Contextual Use of Isaiah...”

Ephesians 5:14	Isaiah 29:19	Isaiah 60:1-2
Awake, O sleeper,	... You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!	
and arise from the dead,	Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise ...	
and Christ will shine on you.		Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you ... the LORD will arise upon you,

We have seen how the **context** of both **fits the entire section** here of Ephesians. But what is the point of what he is trying to say and why does it matter if this is a quotation from the OT or not?

First, it matters because Paul said “**it says.**” He didn’t say, “**I say**” or “**some other Christian said**” or even like a prophet, “**The LORD said.**” He is clearly talking about the Scripture. And so, if it doesn’t come from the Scripture, we have a serious problem.

Second, the point he is making has to do with again returning to the power that allows anyone to come into the light out of darkness. This is the power of regeneration, the only thing that can cause a person to repent of their sins and turn to Christ. It is the power of the Word of God.

This power is pictured for us by another prophet, Ezekiel. Ezekiel comes to a valley full of bones (Ezek 37:1). The Angel of the LORD asks him if these bones can live and the prophet says, “O Lord GOD (Adonai YAHWEH), you know” (3). So the LORD tells him to “Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD” (4). As the prophet speaks the message, the bones come to life, a mighty army for the LORD (5ff).

For Paul, the word “awake” is spoken to those who are dead (Eph 2:1; 1Co 15:18; 1Th 4:13; etc.). Hence, “Arise from the dead.” This is the power of the Word. He is speaking to the dead and the dead come to life by the power of the word to Awake.” “Lazarus, come out!” (John 11:43). And he came out of the tomb alive. You see, to expose the darkness you need the light; to turn the darkness into light you need repentance; to have repentance you need new life. You need to be raised from the dead. Thus, Paul is actually giving that power to the Ephesians and to you by speaking it forth right here.

Awake from your slumber and rise from the dead. Come to life by the power of the Resurrection and the Life—the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hear these words as the bones heard and stood up on command. Then know that in

the hearing, “Christ will shine on you.” That’s the order of it. That’s the power.

If you want to live in the light, you must become light. You must shine. To shine, you need The Light illuminating you. When you hear the Word, you begin to shine like the moon shines from the light of the sun. You reflect the light of Christ in your very person and thus your habits and activities, your hands and your mouth and your whole body begin to align with that light, behaving as you now can, in the proper fear of the LORD.

But it is this resurrection idea that is another reason why it matters that Paul is quoting the OT. If Isaiah said this, then it means Isaiah knew of the resurrection from the dead.¹⁴ Of course, Jesus himself tells us that the OT predicts the resurrection and Paul is clearly saying that Isaiah is doing that here. The Scripture is the same on these matters from the beginning (God is the God of the living Abraham) to the end. It teaches no new doctrine of a resurrection in the NT. It is trustworthy and true, powerful and life-changing to those who have an ear to hear. And since that is true, Calvin is surely right to encourage us, “Let us therefore try as hard

¹⁴ Lunde makes a rather conservative observation when he says, “Notions of literal resurrection cannot be ruled out completely, however, since the prophet anticipates death’s ultimate demise in Isa 25:6–10.” Lunde, 95.

as we can to rouse the sleeping and the dead, so that we may bring them to the light of Christ.”

There needs to be **an urgency** in this from each of you, in church, in your homes, in the places where you develop relationships with non-Christians, and everywhere the Spirit urges you. People are living in deep darkness. It is thick and tangible, like you could touch it. It is growing hourly. You can sense it. You can see it. People are trapped in it. They are committing all manner of shameful activities. There is only one force that can stop it. The Gospel of Christ who tells them to wake up and come to life that he himself might shine upon them. There is hope for those who feel totally trapped and lost in the darkness. That is our message. In fact Isaiah said that too. For if Paul is quoting Isaiah and says it is Christ who will shine on us, then Isaiah’s “**Yahweh**” **who shines must be Christ!** This is how you are to read the Scriptures.

Discern What Is Pleasing

There is **one more statement** I have not mentioned. It is back in vs. **10**. It is the center of the structure. “**And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.**” I have now given you

the answer to this. He is speaking here about **the will of the LORD**. He is not talking of the secret will—trying to figure out where you should move or which job you should take or which school to go to or which girl to marry. You cannot know those things until they come to pass. So do what your heart desires without sin.

He is talking here about **the revealed will of God**, that which has been made known. “**The secret things belong to the LORD, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law**” (**Deut 29:29**). What he has revealed to you today is that you are to hear the word of Christ, believe the gospel, come to life, repent of your sins, turn from the darkness, run to the light, reflect the light, indeed be the light, and then in ever increasing measure obey the commandments of God as the shining light to the world. This is the city on the hill that Jesus spoke about. You, the church.

So far, we have seen commandments about sexual purity, anger, theft, corrupting talk, bitterness, and wrath that help you to this end. We have seen positive commands to be tenderhearted, forgiving, and kind. We will soon see more,

including thoughts on drunkenness, foolish living, the importance of song, and how to deal with intimate relationships, among other things.

Until then, **may the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.** As another old blessing says, **may Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path.**

Select Bibliography

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