

Session 6

February 25, 2018

I AM A LIGHT

Ephesians 5:8-14

On a recent trip to my home in Maryland, I encountered a sled from my childhood. For just a few minutes, I was carried back in time to those joyous days of “no school because of snow” followed by harrowing nights of sled riding with my brothers and cousins down the hills of the family farm. Once we were wet and exhausted (after all, every quick ride down was followed by a long walk back up), we would trudge back home pulling our sleds behind us. One of the most welcome sights on those cold nights was when we crested the last hill on the way home and saw the warm steady glow of the back porch light. That light was a welcome sight; a beacon drawing us out of the night.

Few metaphors in Scripture are more powerful than that of light versus darkness, and the saving grace that draws sinners out of the darkness. In this week’s text, Paul applies the attribute of light not to Jesus Christ, but to believers. In doing so, he highlights both our characteristics as Christ-followers and our obligations. Several key truths are notable.

Light is brought about by the new birth (v. 8). “Once darkness” is loaded with meaning. *Once* points back to a previous time, while *darkness* describes the state of being helplessly and hopelessly lost. The Bible is clear in reminding believers that they were once lost. Paul told the believers at Ephesus they were once dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), and after listing a long litany of immoral sins in 1 Corinthians 6, he reminded those church members, “And such were some of you!” (1 Cor. 6:11). The only deliverance that exists for those in darkness is the new birth. To be “children of the light” (v. 8) one has to be born into the light.

Light requires believers to shine (v. 8). While light has many functions, its chief characteristic is driving out darkness. Jesus called Himself “the light of the world” (John 8:12). John said His life was the “light of men” that “shines in the darkness” (John 1:4, 5). Jesus promised that His followers “will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). The clear indication is that Christ-followers are to have the same characteristics of Jesus when it comes to living a life that dispels darkness. Simply put, we are to shine!

Light exposes both good and evil (vv. 9-13). While light is driving out darkness, it illuminates—and thus exposes—whatever it shines upon. “Everything exposed by the light is made clear, for what makes everything clear is light,” Paul says in verses 13 and 14. In other words, the light of God’s truth makes everything clear. There is nothing left lurking in the hazy shadows of uncertainty. The good fruit that pleases the Lord is exposed. The evil secrets of darkness (that Paul refers to as shameful to even mention) are also exposed.

Light awakens believers to action (v.14). Perhaps the most uncomfortable thought here is found in Paul’s command not only to shun the deeds associated with darkness, but to actually expose them! (v. 11). In our super-tolerant society, those who expose evil are normally attacked for their perceived intolerance. But the fact is, apart from light, there is no deliverance from the darkness. Jesus said, “The one who walks in darkness doesn’t know where he’s going” (John 12:35). The section ends with a command. To arise from sleep is a call to the church to do what light is supposed to do...pierce the darkness, illuminate with God’s truth, expose good and evil, and shine as Christ did.