

“Can I See Right Through You?”

Portions contributed by [Thomas Bowen](#).

Isaiah 60:1-3

Ephesians 5:8-14

Well, here we are...just 4 weeks away from Easter. Just 4 weeks until our kids are on their sugar highs, spring will have been completely sprung, and of course, summer is right around the corner.

But, we are not quite there yet. Because we are on a Lenten journey with a long way to go...that is if you are taking this trip seriously. Now I know some of you are, and I know that a lot of us are being forced to do so...you know with all that is going on in our world right now, but I hope, that in either way, you are finding purpose and meaning as you focus on God.

Let me ask you this, are you looking for the full change in the weather? Because, right now it seems like one day it is full spring and the next were back into a mild winter. It is interesting how just a few degrees can make such a difference in our outlook of a day. A few degrees can make all the difference in having a really good day, or a really bad day.

How many of you have heard the statement, “They are as different as night and day.”?

I mean, isn't that our perception of good and bad days? Sometimes we say that about people...right? Sometimes, I describe my children like that. As they have different viewpoints and habits. They have different responses to good and bad situations. It is especially obvious in their school work.

Well, in our scripture today Paul is using this same kind of contrast between day and night when he is speaking of the old life, you know without Christ, as compared to the new life, in Christ.

In this scripture, Paul is speaking to believers when he says, **“You were once darkness but now you are light in the Lord.”**

In essence, he is saying that before we come to Christ, we are dead in our trespasses and sins. We are in darkness and don't have a clue that we are dead to the true way, to a blessed life. We are without any light at all, and are content to just being in darkness.

We are content to live for today, and have no real hope for tomorrow. What is the use, life for today...for tomorrow we die?

That is the slogan for people living in darkness. It is the slogan for many of the people in our world today. A life in darkness is a life without hope. Night limits our vision; it mutes the colors it limits our ability to move freely.

But then something happens to a person that...that finds a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We have, by God's grace, been made **“light in the Lord.”** Because Jesus came to save us, we are in Christ and we are now people of light...People of the Day.

Why, exactly, is this **“light”** terminology even used? Well, it is because Jesus said, **“I AM the light of the world.”** And because of that we, who were once children of darkness, have now become children of light. We have gone from night to day.

So now, the Lenten Season is a time to evaluate our lives...and to evaluate our relationship with God.

Well, are we living as children of the light, and how the children of the light should be living? Are we shining brightly in a darkened world, or have we grown so dim that we can hardly be distinguished from non-Christians?

I Peter 2:9 says, **“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praise of him who called you out of the darkness and into his wonderful light.”**

This is the same theme perhaps with an even greater connection to responsibility...for **WE are chosen.**

I think back to a time when I wanted to be chosen. You remember as kids, and you had to pick sides for a game; baseball, dodge-ball, volleyball, or whatever. I wanted to be picked. But then, when we become adults, we seem to lose that desire...you know, when you get the letter for jury duty. Perhaps when some special responsibility of leadership makes us want to...run and hide.

It often seems to carry over into our church life too; many times we put ourselves down by saying, “Oh, I’m just a nobody. I don’t have enough faith. I’m just not good enough. I’m just an ‘ordinary run-of-the-mill Christian’. I’ve done my part. I don’t have any talents and can’t do much for the Lord...”

But can you see, that’s not scriptural. Each of us has been called to live different lives from those who are stumbling around in darkness and sin. We are to live in a way that is as different as night and day.

We have the responsibility to show up in the world by living a contrasting way of life--by showing that Christ really does make a difference in how we live our daily lives. Wherever we go we can cast an illuminating beam of light into the dark corners, and be a positive influence on those who are still lost in darkness.

In order to do this Paul says in Romans 12, **“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”**

Change your dark outlook into one of optimism and light.

This is not going to happen overnight, it is more like the coming of spring leading us into summer. The modification process happens over weeks months and maybe even years, transforming us a little each day.

There were two brothers who earned their money by stealing sheep and selling them. As happens to all thieves, one day they were caught. Rather than kill them, the villagers decided to brand the two brothers on the forehead with the letters S. T., for sheep thief.

The action so embarrassed the one brother that he left town and was never heard from again. Now the other brother was so filled with remorse, he stayed in town and tried to reconcile himself to the villagers that he had wronged. At first the villagers were skeptical and most...most wouldn't have anything to do with him.

But he was determined to make restitution. So whenever there was sickness, the sheep thief was there to help care for the sick person. Whenever there was work that needed to be done, the sheep thief showed up to help. He was always there to lend a helping hand and he soon was an integral part of the community. His life was lived for others and as a consequence he was a friend of all and became well respected.

Now, years later, a traveler came through town. As he sat eating his lunch at a little cafe, he noticed the old man with the strange brand on his forehead. People would stop by to say a few words to him, and even the children seemed to like him.

The stranger's curiosity caused him to ask the owner of the cafe, "What does the strange brand on his forehead stand for?"

The cafe owner thought for a minute and said, "Gosh! It happened so long ago that I don't rightly remember. But I think it stands for...SAINT."

So, how do we go about living as children of the light?

First of all we have to want to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. Our actions should reflect our faith. Steer clear of questionable things as well as things that you know for certain are just plain sin.

You see, Paul says, we must begin to produce the fruit of light. That seems sort of vague doesn't it?

Our actions must correspond to the light. Well, Paul also names three things that are produced: goodness, righteousness, and truth. You see, these are direct contrast to malice, injustice, and falsehood.

What are the things that would please God? How can we know...God blesses things done in faith? Well, God directs those that listen and respond to his direction. Anything that you do for God that glorifies him, and his son, and not just yourselves, you are then living a life of self-sacrifice.

Any time we make a decision and the result is that people think of Jesus or God, "Sha-Zam" you are living in the light.

Because you see, a life of goodness doesn't just happen. If you don't practice self-sacrificing love in the little daily things, it will never happen for the really big things.

Christ in our lives makes a difference, and because of this we are gradually changing to the point that we make a difference. That we touch lives and carry the light into this dark world.

Benjamin Franklin wanted to convince the citizens of Philadelphia to light the streets at night as protection against crime and as a convenience for evening travel. When he failed to influence them by words, he bought an attractive lantern and placed it on a long bracket in front of his house. Each evening he lit the wick and his neighbors noticed the warm glow in front of his house. Passersby appreciated the light and soon others began placing lanterns in front of their homes too. Eventually the city recognized the need for well-lit streets.

Folks, our lives should shine so that others will see the need for God's light in their lives as well.

Walking in the light not only produces goodness, which reaches out to others around us, but it produces righteousness. And righteousness means living in right standing with God.

You see, righteousness is no accident, it is an intentional way of living. If we are pursuing a right standing with God and others, we will live the same on Monday morning, as we lived on Sunday in church, and people will see that. We won't have to go around telling others, "I'm a Christian." It will be obvious to them.

-Two little old ladies were walking around a very crowded English country churchyard and came upon a tombstone that was inscribed, "Here lies John Smith, a politician and an honest man."

"Good heavens!" said one lady to the other. "Isn't it awful that they had to put two people in the same grave?"

The third thing that walking in the light produces is truthfulness.

It means the absence of deception. We all probably think of ourselves as truthful for the most part. But, how do the neighbors view us? Do we really keep our word all the time...Every time? Do we always speak the truth about other people...or perhaps do we add a little opinion?

Truth is about what we say, whereas goodness is about what we do and righteousness is about how we live. The fruit produced here--goodness (toward others), right standing (before God), and truth, would make a tremendous difference in our lives because it would begin to permeate every area of our life.

We all know that we don't measure up like we should in the light of God's spotlight, but we continue to walk in the light that we have been given. We continue to, or begin again, to shine.

A couple took their young son with them on a trip to Europe where they visited many cathedrals. When they returned home the little boy's Sunday school teacher asked him, "Did you learn what a saint is?"

He remembered the many stained glass windows which depicted the Christian saints and he said, "A saint is a person who the light shines through."

If we are living as persons of the light we will be people that the light shines through. We will be transparent and the light of the world will be visible in the darkness we live in. Others will benefit from the soft glow and perhaps move toward the light for themselves.

-So, what is our part in all of this?

-How do we go about producing fruit?

-Where do we start?

-If we see that we are not shining as brightly and we are not really walking in the light, what then, do we do?

Verse 10 in the New Living Translation says, "**Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.**" It says TRY--YOU TRY to find out. This responsibility is on your shoulders--not somebody else's.

The Message Bible says, "**FIGURE OUT what will please Christ--and then DO IT.**"

"YOU", is the subject of the sentence. So, "YOU" need to make it your business to try to figure out what pleases the Lord.

To "**find out**", in Greek, has to do with the testing of metal. It means to test and experiment. It is an active word. You can't find out, or test, by just sitting still and waiting and watching.

Those who live as children of light will be continually trying to figure out what the will of God is in every situation, so that we would please Him rather than grieve Him. This requires OUR ACTIVE involvement in our Christianity.

We can't be PASSIVE Christians. We are in partnership with God. Some things only He can do for us and some things we have to do for ourselves.

“YOU” find out what is pleasing to God. “YOU” begin to walk in the light. “YOU” begin to believe the Word.

Paul says that we are not to take part in evil--rather to expose sin. We do that INDIRECTLY by the way we live our daily lives. We are to make relationships with people in the darkness but, we are not supposed to wallow in the pig pin with them.

We are to be the lights of truth in the darkness that is right outside the door.

We sometimes need to speak up and say, “I think this is wrong.” We don't take sin seriously enough though, and we forget how it can dim the light that the world around us sees. Sometimes we participate in the same filth as the world. Instead of influencing, we become influenced.

When we walk in the light we become spiritually awake.

Verse 14 is a wakeup call for believers who are in a spiritual slumber. It was taken from a scripture in Isaiah. Isaiah 60:1-2 **“ARISE, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you...”**

This was used as a part of an early resurrection hymn and used at baptisms.

In Ephesians, Paul spends much of this letter telling the people there, to remember that they are different. They have been transformed and are no longer a part of the darkness. They are to live a new way. They are to stop sinning by repentance and enter a life of holy obedience.

Paul is talking to a group of Christians and advising them that they are no longer people of the darkness. They are representatives of the light of the world, Jesus Christ, and they cannot be asleep at the wheel.

Wake up and recognize that things are different. That if you are not living for Christ, then you are slipping back into the darkness, and the light offered by Jesus Christ, is growing dim and ineffective, and at some point, if it does not go out, will become useless. The light that we are to reflect must be useful and fill the need of a darkened world.

The research says Paul was martyred at the age of 68 after serving God for 35 years. His devotion and commitment kept him in jail and in front of powerful people, while sharing the good news right up to his death. He seems to have never really rested.

In the church today there are a lot of Rip Van Winkle Christians--who go to sleep not long after they made the decision to follow Christ. Paul calls for the church to wake up. To become the light because of the salvation that Christ offers today.

Now, take a look back on your own life since becoming a Christian, what positive changes have you seen? Where have you seen the greatest change--in your language, your desires, your values, the way you treat people, your family life?

Is any fruit being produced?--any goodness, righteousness, truth? Are you trying to actively figure out what pleases the Lord and then do it?

You were once darkness--But now you are light in the Lord. Things are Different Now. Can people see right through you, if so What do they see?

They should see the light of the world offered for you and everyone you know.

This Lenten season, are you working on becoming the saint that you are called to be? **Amen!!!**