

Children of Light, Awake!

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the urgent call to wake up from spiritual sleep and shine the light of Christ in a dark world. It challenges Christians to expose the works of darkness, be diligent in discerning God's will, and make the best use of time in reaching out to the lost. The message highlights the danger of indifference, the need to be actively engaged in sharing the Gospel, and the promise of Christ shining on those who faithfully walk as children of light.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:14, Ephesians 5:8, Ephesians 5:15, Romans 13:11, John 8:12, Matthew 5:14

Topics: "Awakening", "Sharing the Gospel"

Description

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Transcript

This morning we are in Ephesians 5. If you'd open up your Bibles there. I want you to see these passages, not just hear them, so please do open your Bibles. I want Paul, and more than that, the Lord who speaks through Paul primarily to speak to you.

I'm not so interested in communicating my opinions to you. I want you to see it's very interesting as we come upon a new decade. I mean, I thought this, that this should be the message as we're coming into a week of prayer and fasting.

We're coming to 2020. What is the message that God would have for His church? Pay very careful attention here. In fact, my introduction is going to deal with some of the technical issues.

And I'm not wanting to bore you with these, but I want you to see what's here. I want you to hear what's here. I want you to be gripped by what's here.

I'm going to take a bigger section of Scripture than usual in this study through Ephesians. Now I'm reading, mark this well, I'm reading from the English Standard Version. And I'm going to make some comments in this introduction about other versions.

I'll try to bring some clarity to some things. But just try to get a feel for what's here. Ephesians 5. And I want to read verses 7-17.

Eleven verses. "...Therefore, do not become partakers with them." Who's them? I mean, very specifically from the context, who's them? Sons of disobedience from v. 6. This is being spoken to Christians, to the Ephesian Christians, the Ephesian church. Christians, "...Therefore, do not become partners with the sons of disobedience.

For at one time you were a darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible.

For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says, awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you. Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Now, I want to sort some things out here. There's a number of things I want to point out to you before we really dive into the text. First, verse 9. If you're holding a King James Version or a New King James Version, as I read, fruit of light in verse 9, your Bible says fruit of the Spirit.

Now there is a textual variant here. Now, if you just look at the flow, fruit of light very much fits the context because it says now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

The fruit of light is found that is all in good, right, true. We ought not to get too bent out of shape because obviously the fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of light. Second comment, verse 10.

The ESV, I do not like when this happens. The ESV totally passes over the fact that verse 10 starts with a participle. What do you mean? Participles basically, typically in English, they end in "-ing." The reason that's so important is because there's a big difference between Paul saying walk as children and try to discern what's pleasing to him.

There's a big difference between that and say walk trying to please Him. Because then the trying to please Him modifies the walk. You see, if you're wondering what it is about walking as children of light, if you look at that and you say what does that mean? The trying, or your translation may say proving, but there should be an "-ing" there because it modifies.

We're walking as children of light and the way you want to walk is trying to prove what's pleasing to Him. That's the issue. It's a participle.

You can cross out try and put trying. It ought to be trying to discern. That's the second thing.

Third thing, you will notice, and I haven't looked into this in depth. It just doesn't need to be looked at that closely in my estimation, but the ESV shortens v. 13 and it puts the last half of v. 13 into v. 14. If you have a New King James Version, a New American Standard, or a King James Version, you have a short v. 14.

The ESV has a short v. 13. There's actually nothing missing in any of the translations. It's just that it gets rearranged.

So, if you've got an ESV, v. 14 starts, for anything that becomes visible is light. All the other translations you guys are carrying, that is found at the end of v. 13. Now that's going to become an issue in just a second.

In fact, the next thing that I have to say to you. V. 13 and 14, there is not a textual issue. A textual issue is when in the original manuscripts, the Greek manuscripts, there's one manuscript that says it one way and they've got other manuscripts that say it another.

That's a textual variant. When I talk about a translation issue, it means they're all working with the same Greek. They just decide to translate it somewhat differently.

If you have the ESV, and you look at that portion I was just talking about, at the beginning of v. 14, if you've got any other translations, it's what's said at the end of v. 13. It's that part that says for anything that becomes visible is light. Or everything that becomes visible is light.

That's what the NAS says. Or whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Whatever makes manifest is light.

You all see it. It's in your Scripture. But there's a translational issue here in the fact that the NAS and the ESV basically say this, becomes visible.

Whereas the New King James, the Old King James, they say make manifest. Now, you see, there's a difference between that. Becoming manifest or becoming visible, that's what happens to itself, whereas making is what it does to something else.

I really believe that the New KJV have it right here. Just think with me for a second. Follow the flow.

I mean, v. 11 says children of light expose the works of darkness. You all see that, right? V. 11, children of light are supposed to be exposing the works of darkness. When you get to v. 13, light exposes.

It makes other things visible. To say that anything that becomes visible is light is not right. Think about that.

Think about what's being said. Anything that becomes visible is light. No, light makes visible.

If I shine light on that chair and all of a sudden that chair brightens up, I don't say that chair is light. The light made it manifest. The KJV, New KJV, I crossed that out a long time ago in my ESV and put makes manifest or makes visible.

That's key because that's what you are supposed to be doing. Now, let's look at something else. V. 14, therefore, it says.

KJV, New KJV, they say, therefore, He says. But if it's it, it's Scripture or something. He, it's God speaking.

Those often get used interchangeably. What's that? I mean, therefore, it says or He says. No one knows for certain exactly where this is being quoted from.

Some people actually have surmised that it's an old Christian song or hymn from the early church. Others have thought one place or another. Brethren, I'll tell you, I honestly believe that if you look at Paul's use of Old Testament passages, he doesn't have a problem loosely paraphrasing sometimes.

I think, this is my personal opinion here, you can argue with me, but I think he is quoting from Isaiah 60, verse 1 and 2. Now, don't turn there, but just listen to this. Isaiah 60, verses 1 and 2 say this, Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples, but the Lord will arise upon you and His glory will be seen upon you and nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising.

I believe he's loosely paraphrasing that. And I'm going to show you as we move along more as to why I really believe that that's it. I think it's ringing the same note that we find right here in the passages before us.

And then what is it that gets said here? Therefore it says, Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead. You say, yeah, but Isaiah 60 doesn't talk about arising. It talks about arising.

It's Paul who shows us arising from where. I think Paul's just adding to this. O sleeper, arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.

I believe this is being said to the church. This is another introductory point that I want to make. I believe it so much I've entitled my sermon, Children of Light Awake.

Now you might say, why? How could he ever come to that conclusion? You might be thinking, hasn't he ever heard that it's not theologically correct to speak to Christians as though they're dead? Well, yes, I learned that somewhere along the way. But, brethren, I don't believe Paul is calling the Ephesian Christians dead. Look at it.

In fact, listen to how Young's literal translation does this verse. Wherefore, he saith, Arouse thyself, thou who art sleeping, and arise out of the dead. Out of.

Now listen, this is a preposition. You go look at your Greek lexicon and you bring this up. You know what you find? That this preposition right here literally means separation from.

That's the emphasis. Arise! Stand up! Get up and come away from the dead. That's the idea here.

He calls them sleepers. You'll notice this. He doesn't call them dead.

He calls them sleepers. Sleepers who need to come away from the dead. Come out from among them.

That's the issue. And this perfectly fits with the context here. What's the context? Therefore, do not become partakers with those sons of disobedience.

Come away from them. Come out from them. They're in darkness.

They're dead. Stand up. Arise up.

He calls them sleepers who need to arise. Come away from. Be separated from.

That's the reality here. This fits in the context. Paul's not going along talking to these Christians about not partaking and showing forth and walking as these children of light and not partaking with them.

Not being involved in these shameless acts. Don't have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. He doesn't all of a sudden just say, okay, now, by the way, I'm going to throw in an evangelistic twist here to all unbelievers.

That's not what's happening. What he's doing is he's telling you don't partake with them. Don't fellowship with them.

Come away. Don't be involved in their darkness. You are to shine your light on and expose what's happening to you.

Just look at how this reads. Look at v. 14. Anything that becomes, or let's just say this, anything that makes manifest, this is the ESV.

That's at the end of v. 13 for those of you that don't have the ESV. Anything that makes manifest is light, therefore, not, oh, by the way, let me interrupt and have a few words to the lost. No, because of that, therefore, sleeper, come out of them.

Arise. Stand up. Move away from them.

Come out from among them. Arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you. Notice what's next.

Look carefully then. NAS says, therefore. You see what he's saying? He just said arise.

Therefore, then. Then what? Look carefully then how you... Who's he talking to? Christians. Christians.

Look carefully how you walk. See, we're to walk as children of light. Not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

Therefore, you Christians, don't be foolish. Don't sit down there in the dark and among the dead. Don't partake with them.

Don't do that. And you know what? This seems entirely consistent with Isaiah 60. Listen to it again.

Arise. From where? What Paul tells us. Arise.

By the way, if you go through and read the entire chapter of Isaiah 60, it's to the church. In fact, sometimes it's almost conflicting where you're like is this talking about the Lord or is this talking about the Lord's people? Yeah, there's such a union between us, but sometimes it can be hard. But the reality is if you read through it, it's clearly talking about the new Jerusalem.

It's talking about Zion. And the Lord is interacting with the one being spoken to. It's the church.

What's the church being told? You don't have to tell Christ to arise. You tell us, the church, arise! Shine! For your light has come and the glory of the Lord, the glory of Christ, has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples.

Now get this. What's Paul talking about? A people that are in dark. The thick darkness of the peoples.

Where do you arise? Arise out of that. Stand up from that. This is where we must arise from.

From the darkness, from the death. But the Lord Christ will arise upon you and His glory will be seen upon you. And I'll just tell you this, Paul talks this way in other places to Christians.

Listen to how he talks. To the Romans, he says, you know the time. The hour has come for you to wake from sleep.

I'm not going to quote what Vest quoted, but the night is far gone, the day is at hand, so then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Wake! And then he throws in darkness and light. This is typical.

1 Thessalonians, he says, you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness, so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. And he talks really strongly to the Corinthians.

He says this, wake up from your drunken stupor. Can you imagine? Paul comes in here and says to you, Christians, that's what he's doing to these Corinthian Christians. Wake up from your drunken stupor, Christian.

Say, whoa! But you know we as Christians need that kind of admonition. I just wonder if he came into this affluency of the United States today and saw the way we live and what we do, would he say that to us? We typically imagine, well, we imagine him saying this to the Corinthians, but we don't imagine him saying it to us. And I suspect it surprised them just as much as it would surprise us.

They were affluent, the Corinthians. They lived in a debauched society. Probably not a whole lot of difference here.

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. What fellowship has light with darkness? Therefore, go out from their midst. This is the reality.

Arise! Come up from that! Stand out from that! Come away! Okay, anyways, that concludes my introduction. Let's just look at it. Ephesians 5. Let's read v. 7 and 8 again.

Therefore, do not become partakers or partners with them. The sons of disobedience from v. 6. Don't partake with them. Christian, don't look like them.

Don't do what they do. It doesn't just mean that you do it with them. That if they go to the bar, you go to the bar with them.

It may mean that what you post on the Internet, if I looked at it, I would say those people aren't any different than the lost people I hung around with in high school and college. That's the idea. Your lost family looks at you and says they're just like us.

Whether you're doing it with them specifically, to partake with them just means to partner with them. It doesn't mean you work together at the same business. It means you're doing the same deeds of unfruitful darkness that they do.

That's the issue here. Do not become partakers with them. For at one time, you were darkness.

But now you are light in the Lord. And you hear the absoluteness of these terms? This is the difference between Christians and all others. This is the difference between Christians and those who are in darkness.

It's absolute. There's no in-between. There's no half-Christians here.

At one time, but now. You were. You are.

This is the issue. A massive change has happened. And notice, Paul doesn't say we were in the dark.

Uh-uh, it's worse than that. Once we were darkness itself. We don't like to imagine that if our children are lost, our neighbors lost.

They are darkness itself. You want to talk about a horror movie? We live in the midst of a world teeming with people who are themselves darkness. We think about Dracula.

We think about the devil. Oh, he is darkness itself. The lost people, they are darkness.

Whatever light was in Adam when God created him, it's gone out. Sin put it out. The light is gone.

Man is altogether darkness within. He's full of darkness. You know what Romans 1 says.

It says their foolish hearts were darkened. Just here a little earlier in this Ephesian epistle, back in 4.17 and following when we talk about we should no longer walk as Gentiles do, how do they walk? It says they're darkened in their understanding. Their understanding is darkened.

Their hearts are darkened. Jesus our Lord says if your eye is bad, you know this, your whole body will be full of darkness. If the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness.

It's great. Jesus also says people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. It's all dark.

People may be out here and they may seemingly do some things that seem good. Ah, it's Christmas time. People give.

You can walk out of the store and the Salvation Army is there and somebody shoves money in there. They are darkness. And Jesus says they love the darkness.

They're darkness lovers. That's the issue. At one time, you were.

You, Christian. But now, now you're light. And you know what happens.

You know what Scripture says. Paul says in another place to another church, he said the God who called this light to come forth out of darkness, He has now shown light in our hearts. And what happens? This light and there is this knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

This is what the light came on. This light of Christ. Here's the thing.

Notice what Paul says in Ephesians 5. He doesn't just say that we've been enlightened or brought into the light. He says now you are light. You're light in the Lord.

The light has entered you. The light has filled you. That's every day of the week.

Monday. You are light in the Lord. I mean, what's happened? The light of God has filled you.

The rays of light are not just simply shed upon you from the outside. God goes inside the heart. The heart is the center.

It's like the light comes forth from us. It's almost like a water where rivers of living waters come out of our bellies. That's how Christ described it, speaking of the Spirit that would be given to us.

You know, Scripture looks at us at times like we're the source. Now we know that God Himself is the source, but what it means is this, from heaven to the earth, God has these lines, mystical lines to each one of us and it's as though the light, the water of life that is shed abroad in this world comes down through these mystical channels into God's people and bursts forth from us. You are the light.

I mean, even if I put the light on the counter and yes, there's a cord that's plugged into the wall, you can say, well, there's a source over there. Yes, but when you're in the dark room and all of a sudden the light comes on, where's the light coming from? Well, it comes from the light. Christ said you are the light of the world.

We know this source. We know there's a power cord that goes back there and we don't diminish that at all. But you have to hear what Paul's saying here.

Paul was saying you are children of light. You are light. You once were darkness, not just in the dark, not just prone to dark.

You were dark. Now you are light. You're light.

Light shines within. Christians filled with light. So, you know what? Don't fall asleep among the dead.

A child of light can go among the dead. Partake with them. Fall asleep among them.

That's the thing. You know what he's saying? You're a child of light. Get out of the cemetery.

You know who lives in cemeteries? Demoniacs. Get out of there. Not children of light.

You are the light of the world. Okay, next. Look at verses 8 through 10.

Jump in right here. Ephesians 5, 8. Walk, right at the end. Walk as children of light.

And jump to 10. Walk as children of light, trying to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Now, here's the thing.

We might comb through the entire Bible to discern what's pleasing to the Lord. And that no doubt ought to be our life's work. But I don't believe that that's specifically what Paul has in mind right here.

I don't believe that Paul is simply looking at these Ephesians and saying, well, you guys need to discern what's pleasing to the Lord, so just go do a study from Genesis to Revelation. No, that's good, and you should do that. I think sometimes this verse is preached that way, but if you notice the context, there's something much more specific on Paul's mind here.

Notice this. He comes back to a very similar thought in verse 17. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

You see, the will of the Lord and what's pleasing to the Lord are basically the same things. And if you've got eyes to see here, what's happening is he says, walk as children of light trying to prove and discern what's pleasing to the Lord. And then you know what he does for seven verses? He tells you what's pleasing and what's according to the will of the Lord.

And when he gets done saying it, then he says, therefore, don't be foolish. Don't be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Understand what it does mean to please the Lord.

That's the issue. Foolish is what we are when we don't understand what the will of the Lord is when we were just told what it is. So what is it? Well, it's this.

Basically, what he's been saying is this. We have to live our Christian lives in this world. Christian, God's will for you.

What is it? Here it is. Don't fall into the same deeds, unfruitful ways, unfruitful works as this world out here. Don't do that.

But don't withdraw either because you have to shine on them. You are the light. Don't partake, but he doesn't say vacate.

He doesn't say set up the monastery. None of that. No, you have a world to live in and you need to live out your Christianity and you need to shine.

That's what the will of the Lord is. That's what's on the table here. That's what's before us.

Don't fall into the same dark deeds and ways as the children of darkness. Arise from there. And if you are doing that, you need to wake up.

Don't sleep there. Don't sleep in the cemetery. Don't sleep among them.

Don't do that. Don't be foolish. You need to discern what the will of the Lord is.

Wake up, church of God. That's the thing. The whole context here makes it crystal clear what falling asleep means.

What does it mean? It means that you fail to shine on unbelievers and their wicked deeds and expose them for what they are. That's the context. You can't fight that.

You all see it. No matter what translation you have, you see that that's exactly what's on the table here. Crystal clear what falling asleep means.

We fail to shine and expose them and their works for what they are. And Jesus said that, did He not? Basically, what this is is we're called to imitate Christ. And Christ Himself said this.

Remember, what was it, John 7? He's talking to His brothers. There's the feast. He didn't go up at first, but later on He went up and He said, look guys, the world can't hate you.

He's talking to His unconverted brothers at that time, but it hates Me. Why did it hate Him? Anybody remember? He testified about the world that its works were evil. And I already mentioned John 3. But you know what? Jesus said that men love darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil.

But you know what? They won't come to the light. Why won't they come to the light? Because if they come to the light, what happens? They're exposed. Same terminology that we have here.

You know what happens when you walk like Christ? You expose people's wickedness. Christian, let me tell you this. Out there, you go out there, because I know you go out these doors and you go places.

You go to restaurants. You go to shopping places. You buy food somewhere.

You go to workplaces. You go to colleges. I'll tell you this, if you're not being this, you're asleep.

And He says, wake up. Awake and come out from among the dead. Don't do that.

The world is in the dark. And God has put a light here for what reason? What do lights do? They make manifest. That's exactly... What do you mean makes manifest? It's because things are not manifest.

Do you recognize when you go out into the world knowing what you know from this book, the vast majority of the world does not know that. They don't know about God. They don't know about sin.

They don't know that their works are unfruitful. They thought putting that money in the Salvation Army can, that's going to get them there. They don't know that their righteousness are filthy rags.

They don't know that. They don't know what Christ really accomplished on the cross. They don't know the value of the soul.

They don't know about eternity. They don't know and you know. And you know what happens when you go out there and you're just silent or even worse, you do the things they do.

You just kill your testimony. You're no light. You don't expose.

And I'll tell you this, Paul knows full well that people who are legitimately people of God sitting in Christ's churches need this message, or he wouldn't have given it to these Ephesian Christians. Wake up. Wake up.

We are to shine on them. That's the issue. And you know what, Paul, those classic words, we often bring them up and talk about them when we're dealing with a disciplinary situation.

You know what Paul said? Paul said, I did talk to you, I did write to you about not associating with the sexually immoral, but he said, I did not mean the sexually immoral and on and on. Out there, otherwise you'd have to come out of the world. And that's not what he wants us to do.

He wants us to associate with them because we're supposed to be like Christ. What did they blame Christ for? He was a friend of tax collectors and sinners. In fact, I still remember from years ago, Spurgeon did a message on the first verse of Luke 16.

It says that the sinners and the tax collectors were coming to Christ. And Spurgeon did a message called the approachableness of Christ. Let me tell you something, exposing people's sins does not mean that you condemn them.

It doesn't mean you're disgusted with them. That's what the Pharisees were. It doesn't mean that at all.

We don't want to be like the Pharisees or the proverbial priest and Levite. You remember the Good Samaritan? They walked by on the other side of the street. That's not it.

Exposing sins doesn't mean that. Expose means you shine light upon. It's the idea of proving something by bringing forth the evidence.

It's got to do with convicting or convincing people of something. Of what? Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness. One of the things is right there.

I already mentioned it. Unfruitful. This world, they don't believe that, but you know that.

You know that no amount of good works. You know that. And you know if you go to the doors out here, people are typically going to say, well, I'm a pretty good person.

I'm basically good at heart. I'm not perfect, but I've never done anything. You know what the world says.

You know what your family says, your coworkers, your fellow students in the places you are. You know what they say. Why do they say it? Because they're in the dark.

Darkness equals ignorance. They're ignorant. They're dark in their understanding.

They're dark in the heart. They're darkness. That means they don't know.

They don't know what they do. They don't realize the danger they're in. And we're supposed to shine on them.

It's unfruitful. Bring that to light. Every person in the dark is just ignorant.

They don't know how unfruitful it all is. You remember what it says in Romans 6. What fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you're now ashamed? What? What fruit did we get? What came of it? We had nothing at all. Nothing.

I mean, that's the startling reality about the life of sin and people out there that are in the darkness. Their whole life amounts to what? One steady, constant, sum it all up, it's sin, it's disgusting, and God rejects it. And you know that.

They don't know that. And you know they don't know that. And you know what happens? We can come in here and we sing our songs.

And people are asleep. You know one of those songs talked about God causing His churches to be full? You say, no, I didn't. You know why you didn't notice that? Because you were asleep.

Maybe you say, well, I did notice that. But then you go out and you don't do anything. You just cruise through the world as though that line in that song didn't mean anything.

How can people do that? Because they're asleep. We're the light. We're the light.

You don't put it under a bushel. A city set on a hill can't be hid. We don't want to be hid.

And we become hidden by our sleep. Just fall asleep. The startling reality about all this, they don't know how unfruitful it all is.

And you know why they don't know? Because they don't know God. And they don't know the Lord Jesus Christ. And they don't know what He came to do.

They don't know the value of their soul. They don't know how reality, the eternity is right there. It's coming.

And what are we to do? We're to bring it all to light. Pharisees can condemn. That's not what you're called to do.

Exposing doesn't mean you go beat them over the head. You remember this. It says, you were.

Just like them, you were darkness. Can't you have compassion just for that one simple reality? We came from the same stock. We know what it's like.

If you come in there beating them over the head like the Pharisees did, you know what the Pharisees, you know how they portrayed themselves? As superior. We're not superior. The only reason that we're in the light and they're not is because God had mercy upon us.

The Pharisees, they cursed. Cursed is these people. Jesus blessed them.

They hated them. They hated tax collectors. They hated sinners.

They could not understand how the Lord Jesus could eat with them. Doesn't He know? This woman comes in off the street, obviously a prostitute. Doesn't He know? How could He let her touch Him? Isn't it amazing? The most holy man ever.

Sinners somehow were attracted to Him. They didn't feel that He stiff-armed them. They came.

See, there may be a negative aspect to our message, and the world will think so. Remember, they hated Him. I'll tell you this, if you're this kind of light, you say, well, that's not easy.

That's not easy to talk to people about what they do and how God does it. You know it's not easy because we don't like to be hated. But Jesus promised us that if we walk like He walks, they're going to do to us the same things they did to Him.

There's really no escaping that. If you want to be a soul winner and you want to shine on people this way, it's a hard road, but it's a glorious road because it says Christ will shine on you. We'll get more to that in a second.

But we don't want to come across in merely a negative and enunciatory fashion. Yes, we expose the sin, but then you shine the light of the Gospel. That's what Jesus did.

Could Jesus come along and said, beware of covetousness? We looked at that last week. But then He could also say, come unto Me, you that labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest. You see why that was so attractive? He didn't enter into them with their sin.

He didn't run off and steal from people just because He was with these tax collectors. Extort people. He didn't have prostitutes washing His feet and then He ran out and get involved with the filth.

He didn't do that. He said you need to beware of these things. He definitely warned.

He said I'll tell you who you should fear. He talked about eternity. He talked about the things that mattered.

But in the end, He gave sinners hope. And that's what we're called to do. Light.

You throw light on that man and upon his whole situation. We need to show them that by all their unfruitful works and ways and religion and all of it, their whole relationship to God is wrong and hell is before them. Jesus did not simply denounce sinners and their sin.

He bid them to come to Him for rest. If you're trying to live as much like the lost world as possible, I just heard recently that some people from this church posted something on social media where a bunch of them were together in a party and they're flaunting all their alcoholic beverages. And I heard one of the

reasons set forth is because we're showing lost people that you don't have to give up all these things if you become a Christian.

I'll tell you this, if you're trying to live as much like them as possible to show them that becoming a Christian, you can be as lost as possible or as close to that line as possible, if you're partaking of the same things, you'll be no rebuke to the darkness. You won't be able to shine on it. You know what people will say? They're just like us.

Nothing to it. You know what? You don't want to show people that Christianity is not misery. We don't need long faces.

But you know we're going to get to it? Don't be drunk with alcohol. Be drunk with the Spirit. If you really want to show them where the happiness is found, you show them that you're happy in Christ.

Not that you're happy in the bottle. That's what they do. That's where they run.

You're not proving anything to them. You're just showing you're asleep. And you're not exposing anything.

In fact, you're being exposed. You think about that demoniac. We all would have felt just like him.

Lord, let us go with You. I want you to go back there. And I want you to go into the saloon and drink as much as possible to show them all how Christianity doesn't make you give up all those things.

What? You know the thing is, He said you go back there and you tell them what great things the Lord has done for you. What? He's just a brand new convert. What about His qualifications? What about it? No, you know what He's telling them? You go back there and be a light.

You know what He's telling them? I don't need all these lights in this boat with Me. I just did this thing for you. You know where I need that light? What? Back there in that city.

Why? You know, in eternity, we may find that a number of people back there from His hometown are in glory. Why? Because the Lord sent Him back there. There was a mercy to that town.

See, that was kind of hard on the guy. He has a mercy to the town. This man had all sorts of things to tell.

And you know what he didn't do? He didn't go back there and condemn them for their smoking or for their piercings. You get that in the church. It's like, no, that's not what he did.

He beat people over the head with that. You just kind of frown at people. Look at that guy smoking over there.

So what? The problem is the guy is headed to hell. There's bigger issues. You go in there to that town where you had undoubtedly these pagans who were worshiping idols they don't know.

And you're like, hey, remember that crazy guy that used to be back in that cemetery breaking chains? Yeah, we remember him. That naked guy up there? Yeah, hey, that's me. You think that got somebody's attention? Like, wow, tell me what happened.

If he was trying to be as much like his old person as possible to try to impress that, that you don't have to give up much to become a Christian, light goes out. No, he's wanting to show them how radically different Christ made him. Awake! Therefore, it says awake, O sleeper.

We do well to stop and take that in. The Apostle knows this. Spiritual sleep is a state that a genuine Christian not only can fall in.

You know if he's saying these words to the Ephesian church. He believes they need it now, they need it tomorrow, and they needed it yesterday. And the reality is, undoubtedly the reality is that all of us are more asleep than we should be.

And some of us are far more asleep than ever we ought to be. And the reality is that God's people have far too often been prone to fall asleep. I don't know what you think about Abner.

Abner was said to be a more righteous man than Joab, but he fell asleep. You remember what happened then? David came and took Saul's spear and his jar of water. Jonah fell asleep.

Awake, O sleeper! Call upon your God! Sleep in Scripture. Some of you may remember the inner circle of the Apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane. They were sleeping.

Simon, are you asleep? I'm sweating great drops of blood, as it were. Are you sleeping? Such things are happening in the kingdom. We hear our brother's message from the first and the fields are white.

It's like we're sleeping in the fields. And it all goes on around us. Sleep.

Sleep. Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Jesus says, why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation. You remember the bride in the Song of Solomon.

She says, I slept. He says, open to Me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one. She says, I've put off my garment.

I've washed my feet. And after a delay, she gets up. She goes, my beloved.

But He's gone. Of course, Bunyan portrays Christian. You remember halfway up the hill of difficulty, he decides there's an arbor, a pleasant arbor.

The Lord designed it for a place of rest, but you know what he did? He fell asleep there. And he lost something. He lost a lot of time.

He had to walk the same path three times in order to go back and get his scroll. Bunyan is allegorizing the Christian life. There's another place in Pilgrim's Progress.

You may remember Hopeful and Christian after they had been with the shepherds. The shepherds showed them a view of the city they were going to. But they said this, between here and there, there's a place called the Enchanted Ground.

You better take care you don't fall asleep there. Don't. What is sleep? What happens? What happens? You know what happens.

We're alive, but we're unconscious. The sleeping man is not aware of what's happening around him. He can move in his sleep.

I hear my wife talk in her sleep. When Jeremy lived with us, he walked in his sleep. People can do a lot of things in their sleep.

But you know what? They're not aware of what's happening around them. They're in the dream world. They're not connected with reality.

And you know what can happen in the church? God's people can pray in their sleep. You come to a prayer meeting, but you don't really wrestle with God. These things are not urgent.

Why? Because you're asleep. You can sing about God filling His churches. Shout to the north.

Oh, it sounded good, but you're asleep. People can pray in their sleep and sing in their sleep, attend preaching in their sleep. And you know what happens when you get people that are sleeping in the church? They like to surround themselves typically with other people that are sleeping.

And when you get a group, there's nobody there to wake each other up. Oh, leave us alone. Let us sleep a little longer.

Such people need someone to shake them. But then they surround themselves with others who are asleep and what they do is they end up comforting each other. And you know what Paul says here? Awake! He says arouse yourselves.

Wake up, Ian Paisley. Wake up, you sleepy Christians! He was preaching the same message and that comes out of Isaiah 2. What a terrible thing. I'll tell you what's really terrible, especially terrible, is when church leaders fall asleep.

Because they of all people should be leading the people not to be asleep. They should be leading the charge. You know what? I think that this has happened over the life of our church.

God brings Christians at times to our church who are sleeping. And then they come here and God uses the church to wake them up. But you know what happens when the leadership goes to sleep? That stops happening.

That's a curse to the church. And I feel that. I fear that.

To sleep? You know what? Somebody's sleeping. They're going to have a child over here who's choking. They're indifferent.

Why? Because they don't know. They're disconnected. They're sleeping.

That's what happens. And if you think about the context of Ephesians 5.14 where He's telling them to awake, what's the context? What's happening? The sleep Paul is calling us out of is the sleep in which we become indifferent to the state of men in the dark. And we don't expose what they're doing.

That's what's here. Redeem the time. How? By being those children of light that bring exposure.

Wake up! Come out from among the dead and shine. And Christ will shine on you. The Christian who's asleep doesn't shine.

He doesn't shine on and expose the darkness. You know what happens? The sleeper really doesn't care. It's like they can have a child over in the next room that's dying, but if they're sleeping, they don't care.

Well, they would care if they were awake, but they're not awake, so they don't care. You see, that's what happens when you fall asleep. The sleeper really doesn't care what happens to the people who live up

and down their streets.

And you know, we can get into a place where this is good. I want God to save our children. And we have prayer meetings after the service and that's good and I want to encourage you to be involved in that.

We take seriously, especially what's going on in the Sunday school classes, we want to reach those children with the Gospel. But I'll tell you this, you can be concerned about your children and you can fall asleep to what's happening in China, in Nepal, in Indonesia, what's happening in Lebanon, what's happening in Mexico, down in Ecuador, in Nicaragua, you just fall asleep to what's happening in San Antonio. Whether these people are in the light or in the darkness, you can be concerned about your children, you can go be involved with Stephanie in the prayer meeting afterwards and then you drive home and you pass by all these people in the dark and you don't care.

Why? Because you're asleep. That's the kind of sleep that Paul is calling us to wake up from. We're just asleep to the state of men who are in the darkness.

What's happening in all these other countries doesn't seem to concern some Christians. Just as long as they're in a good church and their trials are somewhat at a minimum, that's all that matters. And look, I don't doubt whether sleeping folks would rejoice if they heard that revival broke out in Nicaragua or revival broke out in Nepal.

Yes, they would probably smile, they would probably rejoice, they probably would. They would be able to thank the Lord if revival came, if salvation fell down from above. But as to waking themselves up to the values of soul so as to engage in some earnest way to shine light on people in their broader families, their neighbors and the next door neighbor and the next door neighbor and the people in this city and in our state and in other countries, they just sleep on.

They'll admit it. I have to admit that when it gets brought up about Lebanon or about China, I don't really care if you're honest. There's Christians like that.

And Paul says, come out of that. Awake to this reality. Don't be foolish.

Know what the will of the Lord is. The will of the Lord is that you expose the darkness. Expose those unfruitful works of darkness.

Shine. Don't go on. People are too much asleep and they're insensible to the state of others.

And you have to remember this. They are darkness. Ignorance wraps them.

Eternity is hastening. Eternity and judgment and wrath. And their souls will be lost forever and forever.

I mean, remember the context. Because of these things, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. That's the context back in 6. We didn't deal so much with that today, but that's the context.

Think of the tears. Think about that word lost. Anybody have to say that? My friend died lost.

My grandfather died. Oh, we've become so accustomed, but because we're sleeping, we can just say it. Does it stab? They're lost.

And that's forever. They've only been in hell just these few years, but it's going to go on forever and ever. See, you have the light to shine and reveal.

You don't have to do it just with your mouth. It can be done in the written page. You can hand a tract to somebody.

You can help with I'll Be Honest to where it goes out onto the Internet. There's a lot of ways you can get that done. You can get the Gospel out.

A lot of ways. You just think of Christ. The cross, wrath, death, blood, sorrow, shame.

Why all of this? Well, He's a Savior. But how are they ever going to call upon a Savior that they don't believe in? How are they ever going to believe in Him if one of the children of light goes out there and shines that light so that they see who He is? And that He came to save? I mean, how much like the apostles do we become? And I'll tell you, I fear this hyper-Calvinism will put a church to sleep. And you know what else will put a church to sleep? Riches and cares, pleasures and stuff.

Here you have those apostles. They're there in the garden with our Master. But what happens? He's sweating great drops of blood.

Awful, agonizing on His face. Crying out these pitiful cries, Father, Abba, if it's possible. But where were they? We heard in the first hour, well, every day of the week, Christ is building His church.

Yeah, there He is. He's interceding. He's praying.

He came to seek. He's seeking the lost. He's seeking to build His kingdom.

Where are they? Are they helping Him? Are they watching against temptation? Are they crying to the Father with Him? Are they watching against the adversary? Not them. There's Peter not too long ago. He said, Lord, I'll go to death with You.

Now he's sleeping. This can be us. See John there.

See James. Every one of them. It's not the very same with some of us.

Our Lord fights the battles. He's interceding. He's watchful.

He pursues the lost sheep. And you know what happens? We're over here and our toys are multiplying. What am I going to buy next? What thing am I going to fill my time and my life with? That's what happens.

We have Christians who sleep arguing over their Christian liberties. I can go to this concert. Doesn't matter if there's filth there.

I can drink. I can display myself on the Internet as though I'm just a partier just like the rest of the world. That's going to attract them all.

Here's the black clouds of wrath. Jesus said there's a wise man and there's a foolish man and there's a storm coming. We know what they are.

The wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. And are we going to just sleep on? Just imagining like this great, vast river just flowing. It's the river of humanity.

And it's black, dark, and it's going over the edge. And we're the saved ones. We're on the shore.

And we're just sleeping. There's a few. They're urgent.

They're earnest. They're shining the light out there. But I'm afraid there's way too many.

And you know what? Paul fears it too. You can see it. They're in that vast city of Ephesus.

How are they going to be reached? And you know this, the public schools aren't going to reach them. The mayor of San Antonio's not going to reach them. And sleeping churches aren't going to reach them.

I'll just tell you this, you can be certain. Be certain that while we sleep, the enemy of mankind is wide awake. I'm certain that the greatest attack that we will feel as a church and have already felt is Him just lulling us to sleep.

Christian, while you sleep, time is running on. That's what He says here. Making the best use of the time.

The time speeds by us faster and faster and faster. Terrible is the speed! You know it! We're already two decades into the new millennia. Where'd they go? Time.

I mean, it's fearful how fast it's moving. It's moving. I looked at the stats.

105 people die every minute off into eternity. The river of humanity is going over that edge at such a fearful pace right out into the eternal abyss at a staggering rate. And you know what? They're ignorant! And you are the light.

You're the light. Brothers and sisters, we may forget these poor people here in San Antonio, but the JW's and the Mormons won't. Are you going to let them be more faithful to their Master than you are going to be to yours? They don't forget.

Every time they come to your door, you say, oh, I'm going to go out and I'm going to challenge them with my correct theological position. Yeah, you go do that. And they're just going to move up and down your streets and up and down your neighborhoods.

And even if they don't go, people naturally are just dark. They're in the darkness. I'll tell you this, if my wife shouts, wake up, which is what Paul's shouting here, it doesn't mean tomorrow.

Nobody ever says wake up and they mean tomorrow. You always mean you need to wake right now. Because I'll tell you, it is so easy to think you're going to wake up tomorrow.

I'm going to wake up one day. You say, well, you know, I think Christ already shines on every true believer. This says that you need to arise, sleeper.

Come away from the dead and Christ will shine on you. But I'll tell you what, I think that this is the same truth that you find when the Great Commission was given. What does it say? It says that you are to go.

It doesn't say how far. Yes, to all the nations, but that includes our own. It can include our own Jerusalem, our own Judea.

But here's the reality. As we go, lo, I am with you always to the end of the world. But you have to recognize that promise to be with us is right there with the promise to teach all things whatsoever Christ commanded

us to the entire world and to make these disciples.

Brethren, the reality is for that person that is the darkness exposer and seeks to live that way in the world, they are going to receive light from Christ that others don't experience. A closeness and a joy and power and things happen. Christ is interested and He's very active where you have such people.

Awake, sleeper. Arise from among the dead. Stand forth.

I would say this, be what Christ has saved you to be and Christ will shine on you in greater and greater ways. Brethren, we have enough churches in the United States and right here in the city of San Antonio that are asleep. God forbid and God help us that all we are is one big bedroom.

Awake! Awake! Isaiah 52, put on your strength, O Zion. Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city. Shine with the Gospel truth.

Shine in your holiness. I'm not trying to become as much like the world as possible. I'm trying to become as much like God as possible.

This is the context in all of this. Brethren, God, deliver us that we should get to the place where we are just that giant bedroom. God forbid that we are in the place that over these coming years, people like John or Kevin or Vess come back here from other places and they find us a great discouragement because from the last time they were here or from two years ago when they were here, we've become altogether different, altogether taken up with our dreams and our soft blankets and our pillows.

And there's that dark river just flows past us and we just yawn. This is the message. This is what He's telling us.

There it is and there's how it ends. Look carefully then. Look carefully therefore how you walk.

You! Don't be unwise. Make the best use of the time. The days are evil.

The days are dark. Don't be foolish. Fools sleep.

Don't be foolish. Understand what the will of the Lord is. You see it here.

And I do think that this is a proper message for a new decade before us. Father, we pray, I pray, make it real, make it powerful. May these words impact.

May they hold sway. Lord, break in. You can do things like make Your Word powerful in the ears of Your people to awaken us.

Lord, I know too many of us on too many occasions have been too tired and too sleepy spiritually for our own good. We have not been altogether wise. There's been too much foolishness, too much not redeeming the time, too much not consistently following hard after that path of the will of the Lord.

Help, O God, our weak endeavor. This dull soul to rapture raise. Lord, Thou must light that flame and that fire.

In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

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