

**Sermon File # 731**

**Title: *Living in the Light***

**Text: Ephesians 5:1-21**

**Manuscript written by Roger Roberts and sermon preached**

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**Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.**

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## ***Living in the Light***

### **Introduction:**

Open your Bibles with me to Ephesians 5:1-21, as we continue looking at this letter of Paul about our new life in Christ. As we have noted, Chapter 4 begins the practical section, which describes our appropriate response to God's saving grace. In these final three chapters, Paul gives the implications of grace for the church, the individual and the family. In chapter 4, Paul calls us to unity, then maturity, and in 4:17-32, he calls us to live up to our identity as new creatures in Christ. In that passage the image Paul uses is that of putting on the new robe/clothes of Christ's life, which is radically different from this world's outlook and lifestyle. In our passage for today we see that the Christian life is described by the metaphor of light.

**Read Ephesians 5:1-21.**

In Scripture, light and darkness are important images. Darkness is used to describe ignorance, unbelief, evil, and death, the absence of knowledge, faith, goodness, and life. Light, by contrast, is the gift and activity of God. In Genesis Chapter One, we have noted light as the first element God created. In Scripture, light expresses God's activity, power, illumination and glory. The light of God symbolizes his gift of wisdom, understanding, and truth.

Jesus is the true light (John 1:9), the light of the world (John 8:12), the way to God and the truth of God (John 14:6). Light is also expressive of God's holiness, beauty, brilliance, and glory. As followers of Christ we are called to reflect his light because we have received a share of his holiness and glory.

Perhaps the key verses of our text are 8-10, which say we are to live as children of light in order to please the Lord. God is light and he has called us to be children of the light. The only way we can please him is to live as children of the light.

One thing I have heard often is that Western Europe and Belgium in particular are places of spiritual darkness. This darkness is endemic with a post-Christian, secular society, which is bereft of the light of biblical revelation and truth. We evangelicals believe that every person outside of faith in Jesus Christ is living in spiritual darkness. And when the vast majority of society is outside of faith in Christ the result is a spiritual darkness that envelops that society.

Nancy and I have enjoyed our trips to Sweden and Norway. Even though we were in the lower part of these great Nordic countries, and about a month after the longest day of the year, nevertheless we were stricken by how long were the daylight hours and how short the night. I was amazed, when I awoke about 3:45 one morning to see daylight! Of course, winters there are dominated by darkness, and in the north of Scandinavia, the sun barely appears during the winter months. The "problem" is one of position. Because this region is near the top of the globe, it is tilted away from the sun during the winter and toward the sun in the summer.

Spiritually, when we are "tilted" or turned away from God and his word, the result is spiritual darkness. Because God's word has been abandoned in this post-Christian culture, we are not to be amazed by the result of spiritual darkness and the resultant effects on culture's morality. What is true for culture and a nation is true for an individual. We followers of Christ are given new life in him in order that, in our world of darkness we might live in the light as children of the light.

Our text tells us that as children of light we must...

### **Look at the dark side (verses 1-7)**

In verses 1-7, Paul is telling us to take a good look at the dark side of life, something we don't like to do. In verses 1 and 2 he reminds us of our calling to live a life of love in imitation of Christ's love for us. This God-like sacrificial, unconditional love is in stark contrast to the world of darkness around us. When we love like Christ loves, our lives will be "tilted toward the Light, characterized by God's light, and will shine like stars in this world of spiritual darkness (Philippians 2:15).

We need to check ourselves to make certain we have not gotten used to the darkness so much that our eyes are adjusted to the dark rather than to the light. These verses, Paul implies, described the Ephesians' former way of life. Back in Chapter 4:17-19, Paul writes, "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more."

- *We are often accustomed to the dark*

Colorful preacher Vance Havner tells about the time a friend took him to a restaurant "where they must have loved darkness rather than light. I stumbled," Havner says, "into the dimly-lit cavern, fumbled for a chair, and mumbled that I needed a flashlight in order to read the menu. When the food finally came I ate it by faith and not by sight. Gradually, however, I began to make out objects a little more clearly.

"My host said, 'Funny, isn't it, how we get used to the dark?' 'Thank you,' I replied, 'You have given me a new sermon subject'" (Page 19ff, *Why Not Just Be Christians?*).

You can relate to this, how going from light into a darkened room we even have to feel around on the wall to find the light switch. And if the power goes out in our house, at first all is darkness. Then eventually our eyes adjust and we can at least see well enough to find a flashlight (what you Brits call a torch) and light some candles in the house.

And in our society of spiritual darkness we have gotten used to the dark. No longer do we realize the difference we, the children of light, are to be from the world.

- *But we are unlike the dark*

Our culture/society is no worse or no better, I suppose, than that in first century Ephesus, even though their paganism was more raw and vivid perhaps. With their great Temple to Artemis, the fertility goddess was worshiped through sex orgies as a religious rite. As I thought of these pagan religious practices, my thoughts ran to the New Age religion espoused in Dan Brown's book and movie, *The Da Vinci Code*, which were popular a few years ago. Rejecting the authentic first century biblical texts and history of the ancient church, Brown exonerates second and third century Gnostic gospels that sought to reinvent Jesus as less than the divine Son of God. Actually, *The Da Vinci Code* is inconsistent even with true Gnosticism, which denied both Jesus' humanity as well as deity, with Brown saying that Jesus was simply a good man who never claimed to be God. *The Da Vinci Code* downgrades Jesus to the level of a mere man, and exalts a New Age view of "the divine feminine," who is worshipped through secret (Gnostic) sexual rites, much like those of first century Ephesus. One of *The Da Vinci Code*'s lies is

that the early church engaged in goddess worship, which is the antithesis of what the early church and its apostolic teachers, such as Paul, taught. Whenever biblical revelation is rejected and a form of Gnosticism emerges, the result will be the exaltation of sexual eroticism and promiscuity, as Paul describes in Romans 1:18ff.

In verse 3, Paul gives the strong adversative, “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality....” There is to be a radical difference in our lives from the culture around us. In verse 4, he says that our talk and what we find to be humorous should be drastically different from the unbelieving world around us. I enjoy good humor, even from some popular television comedians, but I find that increasingly they rely on sexual themes for their humor, which is reflective of the growing appetite of the culture for the lewd and base. If as Christians we find ourselves enjoying humor based upon sexual lewdness, we need to heed these words of warning from our text.

Why this mention of thanksgiving in verse four? Perhaps Paul is saying that instead of speaking about sex with unwholesome, crude, or double-entendre references, we should not remain prudishly silent. Rather, we should thank God for the gift of sexual fulfillment through the marriage relationship. Sex within the purposes of God for a faithful marriage relationship is to be celebrated, not cheapened with lewd conversation and behavior.

A number of years ago, a popular women’s magazine in the US, *Redbook*, polled women across the entire spectrum of religious and moral beliefs and practices and discovered that deeply religious women with strong moral values and monogamous marriage commitment found the greatest sexual gratification.

There is to be a great cultural difference among believers and non-believers. We are to be God’s light in a dark world. Verse five strongly implies that if there is no distinction from the dark, we have serious reason to question the validity of our salvation profession of faith. Immorality, impurity and greed, Paul writes, are indicative of idolatry, that another than the God of our Lord Jesus Christ is being worshiped. Assurance is not the same as presumption.

We are not to partner with the dark world, nor are we to be hermetically sealed off from the world as spiritual and social hermits. We are called to be witnesses in our world. In his High Priestly Prayer, Jesus asked the Father to protect us from the world, but not to take us out of the world (John 17:15). Paul writes to the Corinthians that there is a distinction between our condoning the practice of immorality by a fellow believer, who in fact needs church discipline, and bearing witness among the immoral unbeliever with whom we must associate (1 Corinthians 5:9-11).

In a river deep inside Mammoth Cave in Kentucky (USA) are fish blinded by the darkness in which they have swum for eons. Those in spiritual darkness have never been exposed to the light of God’s truth. So we are not to be surprised by the spiritual darkness of the world around us. We are rather to pity those who are unable to see moral and spiritual truth. When we observe

flagrant immorality on display before us, and on the media, our response should be pity and sadness as much as anger. And God has placed us among them in order that we might witness to the light which they so desperately need.

We do well to look at the dark side, but we do better to...

### **Leave the dark side (verses 8-14)**

In verses 8-14 Paul is saying that we need to leave the dark side.

We who are following Jesus Christ are able to see because we *are* light, not just that we *have* light. Christ, the light of the world, lives in us (verse 8). The light of Jesus expels the darkness.

- *The Light expels the darkness*

Neil Anderson says this eighth verse “describes the essential change of nature which occurs at salvation: ‘You were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light.’ It doesn’t say you were *in* darkness,” notes Anderson, “It says you *were* darkness. Darkness was your nature, your very essence, as an unbeliever. Nor does it say you are now *in* the light; it says you *are* light. God changed your basic nature from darkness to light. The issue in this passage is not improving your nature. Your new nature is already determined. The issue is learning to walk in harmony with your new nature. How do you do that? By learning to walk by faith and walk in the Spirit...” (Neil Anderson, pages 73-74, *Victory over the Darkness*).

We are to live in harmony with our new nature. As Anderson says, we are not on a performance basis with God, trying to act like him. But we are rather in a relationship with him, and are to let him live his life through us. We have been made light, by his grace. Now we are to hate the darkness.

Early in our marriage, Nancy and I attended a Southern Baptist Convention in Miami, Florida. My father, whose secretary always had reserved good hotels, missed it this time. We arrived late and exhausted, and after checking into this hotel, which was obviously being renovated, fell into bed and went fast asleep. Not until morning, when the sun rose and shone through dirty curtains, did we realize we were sleeping in dirty linens, and staying in a dirty room. We didn’t remain there, once the dirtiness was brought to light.

We are children of the light. We now want to do what pleases the Lord, which is to bear the fruit of goodness, righteousness, and truth (verse 9). Our lives are now taking on the likeness of Christ himself.

CH Spurgeon, the great preacher/pastor of nineteenth century England, was asked by a young, would-be biographer if he could have the pastor’s permission to right his biography, and if so, were there any facts about his life he wanted omitted. The great preacher replied, “You can write all my life in

the sky. I have nothing to hide.” Would that we all could say the same about our life!

- *And we must expose the deeds of darkness*

We leave behind the old way of life, even to the point of exposing the deeds of those who live in darkness (verse 11). Our lives are a silent rebuke, but also a powerful and positive witness. The Spirit of Jesus shines through our life and witness to bring the lost to the light, as is depicted in the baptismal hymn in our text (verses 13-14).

Living in the light means that we will allow the light of God’s Spirit to expose the sin in our own lives first of all. As David wrote, “In your light we see light” (Psalm 36:9b). And in Proverbs 20:27 we read, “The lamp of the Lord searches the spirit of a man; it searches his inmost being.” Before we were born again of God’s Spirit, we were convicted as sinners before him, and looking to Christ crucified, we experienced God’s gracious forgiveness and received his free gift of righteousness and eternal life. Yet we still have this old sin nature, which we will carry with us to the grave. And even we who know the Lord need often need to allow the Holy Spirit to...

“Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
 test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
 See if there is any offensive way in me,  
 and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24).

Christians, although saved through the blood of Christ, can still allow Satan to accuse us for sins and evil deeds of the distant past, that have not been erased from our memory. As Leanne Payne states so forcefully, there needs to be healing prayer that sends our past sins and painful memories to Christ upon the cross. Jesus died for all of these sins and deeds that cause such painful, accusing and even tormenting memories (See *The Healing Presence: Curing the Soul through Union with Christ*).

Our leaving the darkness means that you and I must hate and leave behind the sin in our own lives. We must also leave behind the painful memories and the “imagined” guilt that Satan tries to heap upon us, to rob us of our joy and peace. We must allow the Holy Spirit to expose the darkness in our own lives. Then we can and even we must expose the darkness in the lives of others.

We as followers of Jesus have misunderstood Jesus’ injunction in his Sermon on the Mount to “do not judge” (Matthew 7:1-6). Indeed, there are things we cannot judge, such as another’s motives, which are known only to God. But in the same Sermon on the Mount Jesus also said we are to be discerning of the true and the counterfeit. Like Jesus himself, we are to warn the lost of their urgent need for Christ and his forgiveness and we are to warn and correct fellow believers who are in spiritual danger. As Jesus teaches, we are hypocrites if we try to take a speck of dust from our brother’s eye while we have a plank in our own eye. But we are to “first take the plank out of (our) own eye, and then (we) will clearly see to remove the speck from (our)

brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5). As we humbly seek God's gracious forgiveness and his spiritual discernment and wisdom, we are to indeed warn, encourage, and assist others in their spiritual walk (Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:16; 4:2, etc.).

To be light among the darkness is no invitation to gain personal popularity with people. You know yourself how irritating it can be for some one to turn on a light that interrupts your sleep. Expect to be resisted and even resented by those whose darkened lives you expose by your godliness and witness.

To dispel the darkness we need to look at the darkness, and leave the darkness by getting our own house in order and by doing what we can do in our own world to dispel the darkness.

We must finally, living in the light means that we....

### **Live as children of light (verses 15-21)**

This is what Paul is telling us in verses 15 through 21. In verse 8 we noted how we are to live as children of light and in this final section Paul tells us how we are to do this.

- *Energized by the Holy Spirit*

The key verse of this section is verse 18: The Holy Spirit saves us and is to continuously fill/control us. We all, as believers, have the Spirit or we are not saved (Romans 8:9). We are baptized by the Spirit at conversion, but Paul is here presenting the truth about an experience and condition many do not understand or receive until later in the Christian life (as was apparently true for some Ephesian disciples, Acts 19:1-7). We are to be filled, and to keep on being filled with the Spirit, letting him have full control of our lives. To be filled with the Spirit is to totally rely on him to enable us to live as children of light.

The Holy Spirit enables us to live wisely, making the most of every opportunity. In verse 16, "redeeming the time" (KJV), "making the most of every opportunity," is to seize the moment. Time here is "kairos," or opportune moment, rather than "chronos," or chronological time.

God gives us all those once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, those "kairos" moments. These are moments of opportunity to seek after the Lord Jesus himself. I believe God is always with us through the Holy Spirit, yet he invites us to seek his full presence all of the time. And there are special moments when he presents himself to us with an unusual anointing. This is for our enjoyment of God, who delights in us and wants us to delight in and enjoy him. We are not to analyze our lives, nor engage in self-destructive introspection, but are to stay focused on and centered in Jesus. We also are to relate a word about Jesus to a neighbor or work associate. These are the moments to speak or do encouraging acts of love and ministry. These are the

opportunities to join God on mission or in ministry. God calls us all to a lifetime of “kairos” moments that God wants us to redeem in our service to him in his kingdom. Those moments may be the precious time you spend with a child or another family member who needs your love and attention and relationship.

John Stott quotes the great American philosopher/theologian, Jonathan Edwards, who in his famous *Resolutions*, wrote just before his twentieth birthday, “Resolved: Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can.” What a life he lived, though but fifty-five years’ duration! (See Stott’s *God’s New Society: Ephesians*).

The Holy Spirit enables our joy and even our hilarity. At Pentecost, remember, the disciples were accused of being drunk with wine. In fact, they were filled with the Spirit as Peter explained (Acts 2:15). The people could find no other explanation for the joy and merriment of these who followed one whom they thought had been crucified but now was risen and reigning.

Verse 18 contrasts being under the influence of wine—resulting in debauchery, i.e., destructive behavior—with being filled with the Spirit, who enables us to live under God’s control. Both excessive wine and the Spirit have this in common: both can control behavior. To be under the influence of alcohol often results in destruction. To be under the influence of the Spirit results in joy and peace.

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who prior to his becoming a pastor was a medical doctor, classifies alcohol a depressant that releases lower animal behavior. But the Holy Spirit is the divine stimulant who heightens powers to enable us to act without fear of embarrassment or a hangover. “The Doctor” says that with alcohol’s control man is diminished to act like an animal, without self-control. That is exactly the opposite of being filled with the Spirit, because what the Spirit does is truly to stimulate.

If it were possible to put the Spirit into the text-book of pharmacology,” says Lloyd-Jones, “I would put Him under the stimulants, for that is truly where He belongs. He really does stimulate. He does not merely appear to do so, as alcohol does, and, thereby fools and deludes us. The Holy Spirit is an active, positive, real stimulus.” Lloyd-Jones elaborates to say the Holy Spirit stimulates our minds, hearts, will, and our joy (Lloyd-Jones, *Darkness and Light: Ephesians 4:17-5:17*).

- *And engaged with each other in dispelling the darkness*

In our text, Paul describes those who live in the light of Christ as those who actively engage in dispelling the spiritual darkness. We are to be a praying, worshiping and witnessing people through who the light of the world, Jesus Christ shines. That’s why Jesus said that we too are the light of the world (John 8:12; Matthew 5:14).

*To dispel* is “to drive, beat; to drive away by or as if by scattering. *Dissipate*” (*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*). For us to be a part of dispelling the darkness in Iran or Africa, we must first consider our calling to dispel the darkness in Belgium and the metropolitan area of Brussels. Or, even more particularly, our responsibility to dispel the darkness at your nation’s mission, NATO, your business, your classroom or in your home address.

Our text describes, in the closing verses, how our task of dispelling the darkness requires our being engaged together in the fellowship and worship of the church. As Spirit-filled believers, we are to be engaged with fellow believers in this joyful fellowship called the church.

Warren Wiersbe says “Your neighborhood tavern is the friendliest place in town!” is the slogan for *National Tavern Month* in the USA. Wiersbe said he decided to test the veracity of that claim, and decided to watch the newspapers for several weeks, and cut out items that related to taverns. “And all of them,” says Wiersbe, “were connected with brawls and murders. The friendliest place in town! But this headline reminded me,” he says, “that the people who drink together often experience a sympathy and conviviality. This fact is no argument for alcohol,” says Wiersbe, “but it does illustrate a point: Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit enjoy being together and experience a sense of joyful oneness in the Lord. They do not need the false stimulants of the world. They have the Spirit of God—and He is all they need” (See WW Wiersbe, *Ephesians: Be Rich*).

The Holy Spirit creates joy, and inward singing and outward encouragement, and praise-filled worship and singing (verse 19) express that joy. Spirit-filled worship has a key role to play in our task of dispelling the darkness. Worship is necessary for the centering of our lives on God and keeping eyes of faith focussed on Jesus Christ. We see in verse 19 different ways to express our worship—psalms, hymns, and choruses. Sounds like blended styles to me, doesn’t it to you? Personal and corporate worship is vital to our keeping our spiritual perspective. We worship to please God, and not ourselves, and when we do, we regain our equilibrium in the midst of the vicissitudes of life (Psalm 73:16-17).

Our worship wars over whether we should use hymns or choruses have it all wrong. Our worship is not to be shaped by cultural/musical forms or personal taste or preference. Our worship, which is formed and informed by biblical truth and biblical psalms, hymns, and testimonial songs/choruses, is to shape our culture. From worship experiences that are life changing, we are to go into our worlds and make disciples and do ministry in Jesus’ name.

Also, Spirit-filled believers are thankful people and are not grumblers and critical, negative complainers. There is also much-needed humility and loving, mutual submission among the Spirit-filled people of God (verse 21). Such a church fellowship is a unified “heaven on earth.” Such a congregation sticks out like a lighthouse on the dark shores of an unbelieving, sin-infected community. We can leave the darkness, then, by hating the darkness enough to do something about it. That means our being God’s sent ones, doing our

mission in the Great Commission. We must seek grace to dispel the darkness in our lives as we live Spirit and praise-filled lives. And we must happily and naturally share Jesus in our spheres of influence, as well as encourage the light of God's witness in this place.

IBC Brussels has continued to be a missions-minded church, supporting various missionaries by prayer and financial contributions. We also have the unique position as an extremely international congregation, representing over 40 different nationalities. In a sense, God is bringing the nations to Belgium and we have the opportunity to share Christ with people from these nations who in all likelihood will return to their home countries. This is particularly true with our students, who are here studying in various universities. And, of course, our involvement with the faculty and students from the Evangelical Theological Faculty has been and continues to be a vitally strategic way to participate in world missions, particularly in Eastern Europe and other areas with unreached people groups.

More than 4 billion of the world's 6 billion inhabitants are non-Christian. Of those 4 billion, an estimated 1.7 billion have never had the opportunity to hear about Jesus Christ. I'm grateful that evangelical mission agencies are seeking ways to target the 2,161 people groups who comprise these 1.7 billion. I pray that IBC Brussels will always resolve to be on mission with God in proclaiming his good news to the unreached who have never heard the message of salvation that brings us from the darkness to the light.

This passage for today, however, is not particularly a missionary passage. It doesn't speak to a global strategy nor does it restate the Great Commission to make disciples of all the ethnic groups of the world. Rather, it speaks about the need for you and me to be light for the Lord right where we live, here at home. Yes, we as part of the greater light, can pray, give, send and we could even go ourselves, at least on short-term mission projects, as some of our people here at IBC have done. Yet, in this passage Paul is indirectly at least, reminding us that "the light that shines the farthest shines brightest at home."

I have heard IBC Brussels, because of our location, called "the church at the top of the hill." I pray that because we let our lights shine for Jesus, together we will indeed become a great lighthouse on the hill. It's as we individually walk in the light of a godly, Spirit-filled life and as we live in godly, unified and loving fellowship, and as we share together in worship and ministry we will be a lighthouse for the gospel.

I still recall a vivid experience in my childhood. I was on a vacation trip with my family in Chicago, USA. We attended a gospel music concert featuring a well-known African American singer, Mahalia Jackson. What I remember most was the ushers in Soldiers' Field Stadium passing a little book of two or three matches to everyone in the crowd of some 50,000 people. The gospel singer gave us instructions on what to do at the conclusion of her rousing song about letting our "little light shine." On cue, the stadium lights were turned off and we were sitting in total darkness. But we knew what to do. We

each one struck and lit our individual matches, and all of a sudden that mammoth stadium was a burst and awash with light.

Individually and separately our lives and witness may not seem significant, but we all have a unique witness to bear. And also, when we are joined together, our lights have a powerful witness and our prayers have great effect in dispelling the darkness around us.

### **Conclusion:**

Every one of us here today is by him/herself a child of darkness, in desperate need of Jesus, the light of the world.

The late Dale Moody, who was my New Testament theology professor in seminary, was fond of researching out early hymns that were included in the New Testament manuscripts. Verse 14 in our text is an example of one of these hymns in Scripture, either written or quoted by Paul. Dr. Moody composed a little tune for this chorus of Scripture and when he would speak in a church, would teach it to the children in the congregation. Once when Dr. Moody was preaching a week-long series of services in a rural Kentucky church, he taught the children this verse 14 as a song,

“Wake up, O sleeper,  
Rise from the dead,  
And Christ will shine on you.”

Unknown to Dale Moody, a little girl in the church, whose father was an abusive alcoholic, went home one night singing this verse. Her drunken father was asleep on the couch, and was awakened by his daughter’s singing gustily, “Wake up, O Sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Moody says that little girl’s singing not only woke her dad from his drunken stupor, it awakened his heart. He instinctively cursed his little girl for awakening him, but then asked what she was singing. She sang it again for him, and then said, “Daddy, I wish you would rise from the dead, and let Christ shine on you.” Dale Moody said that abusive, drunken father went with his little girl to the next church service and confessed Jesus as his Lord and trusted him as his Savior.

For all of us who are converted the same thing happens. We may not be drunk, but we are dead in our transgressions and sins (Ephesians 2:1). Christ alone can shine into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). Some here this morning need Christ as Savior.

Others need to surrender to him as Lord, and begin to leave the dark side and live again as children of light. This verse calling for the sleeper to awaken (14) is actually addressed to the somnolent believer rather than the spiritually dead sinner (H Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 687f). It’s an urgent, opportune moment for you before you forfeit the influence you

need to have on your family. It's time for you to get right with God before you lose your testimony at work or in school. We'll note, when we return to our study of Ephesians after a time in John's Gospel beginning next Sunday, how that being filled with the Holy Spirit gives us wisdom in our relationships in marriage, parenting, work and spiritual warfare (5:22-6:20). These are evil days, and we must seize the moment to turn to the light and seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit before we lose our God-given opportunities as his witnesses to the light of the world.

All of us need to resolve to live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Some for the first time need to forsake sin and follow Jesus Christ in the fullness of his power. Others need to connect with the ministry of this church and add the light of your witness to that of our corporate witness. Are we aware of the darkness around us? Are you willing to do all Christ commands so you will do your part in dispelling the darkness?

Do you and I see and sense the darkness around us? Instead of being overwhelmed by the darkness, would you join with God in his work of dispelling the darkness by living in the light?

**Questions for personal reflection and/or group discussion:**

1. What do the biblical images of darkness and light symbolize?
2. What factors contribute to the spiritual darkness of a culture or society?
3. How is it possible for Christians to become so accustomed to the spiritual darkness around us that we are no longer disturbed by it?
4. In what ways should our lives as Christians expose the spiritual darkness that surrounds us, in the lives of our family, friends and associates and the general culture?
5. Considering verses 15 and 16, how is a Christian to regard and manage time?
6. Describe a life that is filled with the Holy Spirit (verse 18).
7. What do verses 19-21 say about the dynamics/characteristics of a Spirit-filled church?

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