



Faces around the Cross

Study Guide

April 12, 2009

When you think of light, you think of waking up to a new day. Paul presented this picture in Ephesians 5:14. *"But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: 'Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"*

Paul is paraphrasing the prophet Isaiah. Read Isaiah 60:1. *"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you."* Here we see that when the Saviour comes into the world, when He arrives, what is the nation of Israel to do? As believers who have also received the Saviour, what are we to do when He comes into our lives?

In Ephesians 5, Paul gives us three frameworks of truth for the believer:

1. Light is productive, evil is barren, and, by its own nature, evil can only destroy.
2. Christians have no fellowship with darkness, but expose the works of darkness.
3. Light not only illumines but transforms.

Maxie Dunnam says, "The light of Christ shining anywhere burns with cleansing, purifying transforming power. That light need not be diffused as it shines through "children of the light." The effect of a Christian life in any community is first to reveal, and in revealing to "rebuke by exposing." Then there is the hopeful fact: whatever the light shines on - if it shines clearly enough, consistently enough, and long enough - it must, in the end, transform.

Have you experienced this? Give an example?

We have the same image in Romans 13:11-13. *And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. ¹³Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.*

Paul invites us to "wake up from our slumber because our salvation is nearer now." Our salvation refers to the expected return of Christ. Just as Jesus taught, Paul is admonishing believers to "love one another." Who has the Lord placed along your path that needs to be shown love? A family member? A work associate? A neighbour? An enemy?

Read 1Thessalonians 5:1-10. Identify the three different meanings of the word "sleep" in verses 6-7. Doctors tell us that some people are "morning people" while others are "evening people." That is, some people are wide awake before the alarm clock rings. They hit the floor running, and never have to yawn or throw cold water on their faces. Others wake up slowly - first one eye, then the other - and then gradually shift gears as they move into the day. When it comes to the return of our Lord, we all must be "morning people" - awake, alert, sober, and ready for the dawning of that wonderful day. What are some ways that you can keep awake and alert for the Lord's return? What difference does the Lord's soon return make in your life?

Please turn over →

That Easter morning, when Christ arose from the dead, was the dawning of a new day for the world. Christians are not sleeping in sin and death. We have been raised from the dead through faith in Him. The darkness of the graveyard is past, and we are now walking in the light of salvation. Salvation is the beginning of a new day, and we ought to live as those who belong to the light, not the darkness.

The believer has no business in the darkness. He is a saint, which means he is a partaker "*in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light*" (Colossians 1:12), and he is a king, because he has been delivered "*from the dominion of darkness*" and has been translated "*into the kingdom of the Son he loves*" (Colossians 1:13). He is "*light in the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:8). Paul shows us that, as believers, our new nature partakes of the highest element in which we now dwell and manifests itself in our conduct. What are some ways that you can walk in the light "*by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead?*"

CLOSING PRAYER (you may want to pray this silently, out loud in unison, or the leader may pray it)

Our Heavenly Father, look upon my life and cause all darkness and doubt to vanish beneath your gaze. Look upon my life and service to You and banish all barriers to effectiveness and faithfulness. Fill my life with Your Holy Spirit to the end that I may this day be led into paths of fruitful service. Through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.