

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 19, 2023

““As light in the Lord, walk as children of light!” (Ephesians 5:8)

By Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 4th Sunday in Lent is from our Epistle reading Ephesians 5:8.

**“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”**

Here ends our text.

In one single verse, Paul paints with broad strokes the life of a Christian, doesn't he? Led by the Holy Spirit, Paul lays out God's message for you and me in a very simple and logical manner. First, Paul tells us who we were. Second, Paul tells us who we've become and how that happened. And third, Paul tells us what we must do now, because of, who we now are. And so, I will gladly follow Paul's three-part outline for today's message.

And as I said, Paul is speaking to all believers in the Lord. He's not just speaking to the Ephesians or to leaders of the church, but to every person who confesses that Jesus is Lord.

So, first of all, Paul makes a big admission. It's your and my admission of who we once were. And it's not very pretty visually. For the picture is complete darkness. Blackness. “You were once darkness.” Take a moment and ponder that visual. Think about how frustrating it is when for some reason there is a power outage and you go to turn on the light switch and nothing happens. Well, if it happens during the day, there might still be enough daylight in the house to get around. But, if it happens at night, then it's pretty dark, except for the light that the moon and the stars might be giving.

Well, we're starting to get the idea of who we were. But, you would have to go caving to experience the total darkness of not being able to see your hand in front of your face.

Or, you could be born blind like the man in our Gospel reading. Physical blindness, is, of course, living in darkness all the time. Paul is telling us that is who we were – darkness.

If you have been listening to the sports news this past week, you may have heard about a syndrome that has been affecting many people. It's call BBS. Broken Bracket Syndrome. It's characterized by a depression of darkness because many of the teams that you picked to make it to the Final Four are already knocked out. There's not much light at the end of the tunnel for you to win your bracket if you chose #1 seeded teams like Purdue or Kansas. Your bracket has a lot of "x's" on it.

Well, there's something much more serious than that, as Paul says, affects not just some, but all people. It's called BSS. Broken Soul Syndrome. You're born with it. It's also called original sin. The soul is darkened and like a physically blind person, there is no way to get out of the darkness by yourself. The blind man in John 9 testified himself to the Pharisees of this great inability. He said:

**“32 Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind.”**

Unheard of. And yet, he was no longer in darkness. There was a big debate about who he was. The church had to ascertain if this was the same blind man everybody knew. The parents were called in to testify. This is our son. We can testify of who he was – born blind. But they were scared to shed light on who their son had become. Why? Because that would mean testifying about who alone could change give sight to the blind, give light to a darkened world. They would have to admit that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Light of the world, did this. And then they would have been thrown out of the church. The parents were hiding the Light of Jesus under a bushel, weren't they?

Yes, there is hope for those suffering from BSS, broken soul syndrome. And it begins with admitting one's complete inability to... be light. As we heard Paul say last week in Romans 5.

**“For when we were still without strength... while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

**“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”** The broken souls, the dark souls. The blind souls. That describes you and me – the before.

But thanks be to God, there is a part II. There is a new person that you have become. Paul simply says it this way. **“Now you are light in the Lord.”** That short phrase, “in the Lord” absolutely has to be said when you describe your new self. For your light comes from the source of all Light and salvation – the Lord Jesus Christ!

Paul gave us a beautiful explanation last week of what happened in the opening verses of Romans 5.

**“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”**

How do you stand? With eyes now wide open, marveling at the grace of God that He has given to each of us through faith. Justified. At peace. No longer frustrated and depressed in darkness. But rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

Through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, your broken soul syndrome has been cured. As we heard in John 3 two weeks ago. We have been born again by water and the Spirit. By baptism you have been given your sight and salvation.

Look at Jesus' use of water to cure the blind man. Look how Jesus leads us to remember our spiritual washing through His physical curing of the blind man. Jesus took His saliva, made some clay, and then told him to wash in the pool of Siloam and he regained his sight.

Remember how Paul himself before he was Paul was Saul. And in his spiritual blindness he persecuted Jesus. What did God do? He physically blinded him to show him how life without Jesus is completely dark. And then only by the power of God could Saul receive his sight again.

**“And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”**

And what happened next in Acts 9?

**“Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.”**

His sins were washed away. And that is how the scales of your spiritual blindness were also washed away – in your baptism! That is who you are. Light IN THE

LORD. You receive a candle at your baptism to symbolize this new light that shines in your hearts – your salvation, your justification, your peace.

Which brings us now to the third part of Paul’s outline – what now? What must you do because of who you now are?

Paul simply says “**Walk as children of light.**” And as simple as that is, oh how difficult it is! For we must be exhorted daily to walk as children of the light and not return to darkness. For we still have the old sinful flesh in us that wants to reign and lead us into darkness. The sinful world entices us to go back to the old way of life and join the world in the deeds of darkness. And of course, the devil constantly tempts us to sin.

Paul opens chapter 5 of our epistle reading from Ephesians with these words. **“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”**

Walk in love as Jesus loved you. Remember always His sweet smelling sacrifice of His death on the cross which forgave your sins and those of the entire world. As He has given Himself for you, give yourself to Him. **“(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),”** You and I are called to live morally good lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. Your fruit of who you have become is uprightness and speaking the truth. And it is goodness and benevolence to others.

At the same time, Paul warns us **“11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”**

What does that mean? Well, Paul gives some very concrete examples of sin that the Ephesians were tempted to fall in the opening verses of this chapter. And it’s no different today. Paul continues:

**“3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them.”**

Don't be partakers. No fellowship. Shine as lights of how God expects all to live in sanctity and purity sexually. For God has blessed the intimacies between a man and a woman only in the marriage.

How serious is this? If a Christian walks in the ways of darkness, he or she has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

And as children of the light, we are called not only live according to God's commandments but expose sin for what it is. A Christian cannot turn a blind eye to the sexual immorality that one sees, but shine the light of God's law upon it that the person who is committing sin, wakes up, repents and is saved.

As a child of the light, you and I have a most sacred duty to help our fellowman know the dire predicament of his or her blindness. You can't hide your light under a bushel.

**“Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.”**

As a child of light, you have a daily outreach ministry to tell people to wake up. And Christ will give you light. He alone can give sight to the blind and fix your broken soul syndrome.

Jesus came to the blind man and shone His light upon Him so that He would know without a doubt who Jesus was.

**““Do you believe in the Son of God?”<sup>36</sup> He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?”<sup>37</sup> And Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.”<sup>38</sup> Then he said, “Lord, I believe!” And he worshiped Him.**

By the power of the Holy Spirit, you too have seen Jesus with eyes of faith. Your sins have been washed in your baptism and the light of Jesus shines in your hearts. Jesus gives you His very body and blood to forgive you and give you strength to continue to shine His light with the fruits of faith and lead others to wake up, arise from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit through His word and receive the light of Christ! Amen

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**