

# Fourth Sunday in Lent – Epistle

Christ Will Shine On You

Ephesians 5:8-14

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Analysis by Carolyn Schneider

8For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light – 9for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. 10Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. 11Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; 13but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

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## DIAGNOSIS: Darkness

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** – *Those Who Cover Themselves Up*

Our author makes a contrast between darkness and light. Notice that it is people that he is talking about. But he is not saying that some people live in darkness and some live in light. Rather, he says that some people are darkness and some people (namely, you, plural, the readers) are light, even though you once were darkness (v. 8). What was it like when you were darkness? The author recalls how, like the darkness, you hid things, covered them up (v. 11). What things? Perhaps you hid

the bad things about your own community. Perhaps you hid the good things about another group of people. Perhaps you were double-blinded and even hid the good things you could have offered.

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem)** – *Those Whose Activity Achieves No Good*

But all this hiding has created a world of shadows, where there are secrets (v. 12) and dangers, cliffs and dark valleys (Psalm 23:4), and no one can see very clearly (John 9:1). It is a world governed not by truth but by spirits, authorities, cosmic powers, and evil forces (Ephesians 2:1-3 and 6:12). Each people has its own lies and “empty words” with which it deceives itself and others and results in activities that do not contribute to life (Ephesians 5:6). In this world, no one seems to need a guiding shepherd (1 Samuel 16:11-12 and Psalm 23:1). Nor do they appreciate light.

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem)** – *Those Who Are Dead*

This type of darkness that we are does not want any light to shine because it would expose our shameful actions. We see light as a threat that hurts us so much that we fear we will be “blinded by the Light” (John 9:39-41 and Ephesians 4:17-19). Our solution is to keep the light covered and take it to the grave with us. But this death we choose leads to no future; it only ends a life with no fruit (v. 11). Thus the world remains overcast.

## **PROGNOSIS: Light**

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** – *Those Who Are a New Creation*

But because the dead are powerless, they cannot continue to cast their pall over the light. So God shines light on you who are dead and gives you a new life. You know this light as Jesus (John 9:5 and Ephesians 5:14), who woke you up from among the

dead. Just like at the beginning, when God created Adam out of the dirt, so Jesus took mud and molded a new people out of you, barely recognizable, because you are now light yourselves, light in the Lord (Genesis 2:4-7 and John 9:5-11). It is as if you were anointed with mud and water (John 9:11) and oil (1 Samuel 16:13 and Psalm 23:5) as God took you in hand to give you a new flesh and a new spirit in baptism – God's own, always active Spirit.

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution)** – *Those Who Reflect Light*

Surely it feels different to be awake and alert, no longer sleeping or unconscious of reality. This new life is a fruitful one because it does not avoid goodness, justice and truth (v. 9). Paying attention to these things produces good work. When you children of Light (v. 8) shine on what is good and right and true, and expose it in your own life together, you reflect your Parent. You make God's reality real in this world.

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution)** – *Those Who Shine in Public*

Goodness, justice and truth can still be difficult to find. But notice that if you look at them in the Light (that is, through Christ), you can pursue them while living in forgiveness and mercy all the days of your life. Christ shines on you and makes you look good and just and truthful, just as Christ makes you see how he has made others look good and just and truthful. And so we build one another up.