

## The Spotlight on Me

Ephesians 5:14

#24 in the Ephesians Series.

May 5th, 2013

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### Prayer

Father would you help us to preach this morning? Would you send your Spirit to enliven the Word in our hearts? Father that always has to be true, but I'm especially aware of it this morning Lord because I don't think anyone here will understand this sermon, and what I mean by that Father is that there's no way the human mind can understand this sermon because we're stuck here in these three dimensions of ours, and you are not. Lord would you help us to believe the sermon? Jesus I thank you that you didn't ask us to comprehend you, to completely understand you, but you ask us to believe you. By your Spirit would you help us to believe the Word, In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Ephesians 5:17

*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality [porneia] and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which [don't fit] but instead let there be Thanksgiving [eucharistia] For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners ["partake"] with them;*

### Ephesians 5:14

*"Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you."*

We've preached on all of this, but it's still a bit terrifying isn't it?

Sexual immorality *porneia*.

Jesus said, "...everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

You know in Muslim societies women wear burkas, black bags so men will not lust. Last Tuesday I did an interfaith worship service, and the Muslim leader brought his wife. She was dressed in a black burka, and all you could see were her eyes. I remember thinking, "What beautiful eyes! I wonder what's under that burka." Sometimes I think I'm hopeless, and there's nothing I can do: "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" writes Paul. Sexual immorality, all impurity, that means any "uncleanness," no dirt, and yet we live on a planet of dirt. Our bodies are literally made of dirt.

Then Paul says, "Don't even let covetousness be named among you." The word used in this passage is *pleonexia*. It's made of two other Greek words which when translated are, "have" and "more: " it means "wanting more."

Psalm 23 "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." But we're Americans; our entire economy is built on wanting. Every commercial means: "Want this!" "Want more!"

Exodus 20:17, the tenth commandment: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife...or his ox, (I've got that one covered) or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's." That's the law and the punishment for breaking it is death. And the law must be written on your heart. Coveting happens in your heart.

And, by the way, we must do all of this without trying, not as work but play, for Paul just wrote, "Imitate God, as beloved children." And as we preached three weeks ago, beloved children don't try to imitate their father.

Remember, I showed you a home movie of my kids putting on a church service, when they were little? But now imagine if I'd said, "kids, I'm laying down the law and you are responsible to obey: Every week you will conduct services in my image, declaring your love for me and my unfailing love for you and if you fail, I will annihilate you with consuming fire!"

If I had done that, they would not have imitated me as beloved children but rather, as terrified little Pharisees.

Beloved children imitate their father freely in the light of his love.

Children are not responsible...Yet beloved children are irresponsibly responsible.

Their imitation isn't work, but play, not desecration but re-creation.

So anyway, "Don't even let sexual immorality, uncleanness, and covetousness be named among you," writes Paul. "Be assured that anyone who is one of these things has no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. This is why the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience."

So obey, without even trying to obey.

I don't know about you, but to me that sounds hopeless, as if there's nothing I can do or that can be done as if I'm dead and buried in darkness already.

Let's keep reading.

Ephesians 5:7-16

*Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were 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 [more literally: "and show," "and discover"]*

Try to discern is one word in Greek, but for some reason the translator feels the need to add the word try; that's a language of responsibility and will power.

*what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful["filthiness,"] 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." [epiphaisei,] Literally: "He will epiphany you, He will enlighten you" Look carefully ["accurately," "well"] then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time [literally: "redeeming the time"], because the days are evil.*

The problem is evil and what's evil? Well it must be darkness. Paul keeps talking about darkness. The problem is darkness and how do we battle the darkness? LIGHT, what we need is enlightenment, an epiphany and "enlightenment" isn't the same as "trying harder," in fact, the harder you try in the dark, the worse it often gets. The faster you run in the wrong direction, all the more lost you'll become.

You can't battle darkness with darkness,  
especially if you are darkness.  
You need Light, Enlightenment.

According to the associated press, Lisa Barnett, 23 years old and a resident of San Diego had a terrifying experience in a grocery store parking lot. Until another customer of the same store noticed that she'd been sitting in her car with her hands behind her head, sitting in exactly the same position for a very long time. He finally approached the car and saw terror on Lisa's face. When he asked her if she was ok she replied that she had been shot in the back of the head and that she had been holding her brains in for over an hour.

Lisa had been desperately trying to save herself. Immediately the man called the paramedics; when they finally got into the car, one of them noticed a Pillsbury biscuit canister in the back seat of the car; it had exploded in the heat. It sounded like a gunshot, and a wad of dough had hit Lisa in the back of her head. When she had reached back she had felt the dough and assumed it was her brains, immediately, she passed out, then came to and tried to "hold her brains in her head," for over an hour, until someone had an epiphany, saying, "Hey, these aren't brains, but delicious buttermilk biscuits." And Lisa was enlightened.

Lisa was not saved by trying to save herself.  
Lisa was saved by an epiphany.  
Her pride wasn't saved; the epiphany annihilated her pride.  
Her pride wasn't saved, but she was saved...  
and she could laugh if she wasn't addicted to her pride.

That's enlightenment!

One morning in the early 80's I was sitting in a little study carol at the CU library, cramming for some class when I felt the need to burp. Then all at once, smoke shot out of my mouth; I was blinded, my eyes burned, I began to choke. And in that instant, I remembered something I had read about "spontaneous human combustion" and I thought, "My God, I'm on fire!" I almost had a heart attack from fear. Then, all at once, I started laughing, uncontrollably for I had an epiphany: I suddenly remembered, that in a rush, that morning, I had taken my zit medication without water, so the capsule had lodged in my throat and just now dissolved, so I wasn't on fire, I just burped zit medicine, tetracycline.

That's enlightenment!

Paul thinks we need enlightenment— not to try harder, but rather, to wake up.

One afternoon when my daughter Becky was in 7th grade she came home visibly distressed. I said, "Becky, what's wrong?" She said, "I got my first report card; it's a 3.9." Then she almost burst into tears on the spot. I said, "Becky, that's great!" She said, "It is not!" I said, "Is too!" She said, "How can 3.9 out of 10 be good?" I said, "Becky it's not out of 10; it's out of 4!" And suddenly Becky had an epiphany, her tears turned to laughter, her sorrow turned to joy, her mourning into dancing, and we all went to Red Robin, or somewhere like that, and partied.

One day you will lose your mind, your entire way of thinking.  
Your old body will spontaneously combust with eternal fire,  
and you'll get your report card; all your accomplishments are dust, an F.

And then you'll have an epiphany, you will be enlightened, your tears will turn into laughter, your sorrow will turn into joy and your mourning into dancing. Your worst day will become your best day; that horrid Friday will become Easter Sunday.

It *will* happen...because it *has* happened.

It will happen, so the only question is:  
How long will you sit in your car,  
holding biscuit dough to the back of your head,  
paralyzed by fear?

How long will you run from the consuming fire, the Light of God?  
How long will you believe that your report card defines you?

How long until you believe the Good News?

See? The Good News is Enlightenment.

Jesus, the Light of the world is Good News... unless of course you are a shadow.

If you are darkness, light does not feel like Good News.

Well, listen to Paul's statement once again.

You see, I think it's an epiphany. After what sounds like eternal damnation Paul writes:

"At one time you were darkness."

He doesn't say dark, or darkened, or like darkness, he says:

"At one time, you were *skatos*."

(*Skatos* is the word Jesus used to describe the place where "men weep and gnash their teeth." It's a word used to describe Hades, Hell and the abode of demons it's the place of evil. "

"At one time, you were *skatos*," writes Paul, "but now, you are light in the Lord."

(Not just lit...but light.)

Talk about an epiphany!

Ephesians 2:3 "You were by nature children of wrath."

Ephesians 2:5 "...dead in your sins."

Ephesians 5:6 "...sons of disobedience"

Ephesians 5:8 "...you were darkness."

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (That's everything.) "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of *Tehown* (the deep, Sheol, Hades.) And God said, " 'Let there be light,' and there was light.' " (Genesis 1:13)

"You were darkness and now you are light in the Lord." You are light.

1 John 1:5 "God is light." I am no language scholar, but as far as I can tell that's only one of two instances in the entire New Testament where "God" is followed by a predicate nominative, with the predicate made explicit in the Greek. 1 John 1: "God is light," and 1 John 4: "God is love." Now, if I say "Pork is meat," it doesn't mean "Meat is pork." Because meat is a larger category than pork. But how could there be a larger category than God?

Maybe we call some things "love" that aren't love.

Maybe we think some things are light that aren't light.

But what if John really meant "God is Light," and light, any real light, is somehow God?

For the last 100 years or so scientists have been utterly baffled by light.

- It comes in a **vast spectrum** so some forms of light we can see with the eyes in our head and some we cannot. Ephesians 1:18, Paul prayed that: “the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened.” We all know that there are blind people who see the light better than many with healthy eyes in their heads.
- So it comes in a vast spectrum and we don’t know what it is. **We can’t judge it;** it must be one, but it seems to be two. We say, “It’s a particle and a wave; it’s two, but maybe it’s one, and we’re two. So, when we think we judge the light, perhaps the light is judging us.
- Light judges us and physicists seem to say it can read our minds. Just read about Schrodinger’s cat, or the Double Slit Experiment, and you’ll think the light is **alive** and reading your brain.
- Perhaps the strangest of all: physicists say that light does not age; all time is present to each photon of light; **light is eternal...eternal!**

Philosophers and scientists will tell you that eternity intersects time in the present moment, which we call “now.” Now is when we make decisions or experience God’s decision. Kierkegaard wrote, “Decision is the awakening to the eternal.”

Paul writes,

“At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.”  
God is Light. Wow! God is Light.

So what is darkness?

Well, darkness is...NOT. It is a no-thing, no-light, No-“I AM that I AM,” no substance, but absence, no-thing, nothing. And “nothing” is so hard to talk about because it’s not. Yet, as soon as you call it “nothing” you make it “something.”  
But that’s an illusion because it’s really nothing; darkness is nothing.

And that raises a fascinating question:

How do you make darkness?

Which of course is the same as asking, “How do you make nothing?”

Technically, I’m not sure that nothing can be made...for it is not, we make it...not.

So I wonder if God made darkness...or just space and time *for* darkness.

I wonder if God, who is Light, made an absence of Light...

or just space and time for an absence of Light, Himself.

I wonder if God, who is Love, made an absence of Love.

I wonder if God who is Good, made evil...or just space and time for evil...

Like He made space and time for me.

Well, I'm not sure that God actually can make evil or darkness.  
However, I can make darkness...I'll show you how!

[Peter puts a white sheet over the cross, creating a white screen. Then he turns on a large spotlight]

God said, "Let there be light." Which is to say, "Let there be me." God is Light, and Jesus is the Light of the world." Then to make darkness, all I have to do is stand in the way of the light.

[Peter stands in front of the spotlight with the sheet in front of him so that his shadow appears, and everyone can see it.]

With the spotlight on me, I create darkness. See the darkness? See the shadow?... Well, no of course you don't see the shadow because there's nothing to see; it is not.

[Peter remains in front of the white sheet pointing out the different features of his shadow.]

What you see is light around an empty space shaped like me. An empty space defined by light, but not light. Notice, my darkness, my shadow (absence) can't touch the light(substance.) My darkness can't comprehend the light. But if light shines on my shadow...well, we'll talk about that later.

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[Peter preaches the following portion of his sermon facing the sheet so that we can watch his shadow as he preaches]

When I was a kid, someone gave me a book on how to make hand shadows. So at night I'd make hand shadows and say to my sister "Look at the bird I made."

[Peter makes a hand shadow of a bird, then a dog]

But of course I didn't make a bird. I made nothing...in the shape of a bird. "Look at the bird," I'd say. Then I'd make a dog or simply my own shadow (that was the easiest.) "Look at the dog. Look at me." One could make an entire world that way.

Actually, the Greek philosopher Plato said, we kind of do make a whole world that way and we see our whole world that way. And remember, Paul is writing to Greeks, and he knows the Greek philosophers.

Plato said we're all like men chained in a cave so we can only see the wall at the back of the cave. The fire behind us casts shadows on the wall in front of us, and we mistake

the shadows for reality, when in fact they're shadows of reality eternal reality. Plato then talks about how difficult it would be if someone broke those chains and called us to come walk in the light.

Well, imagine if I were like a man chained in Plato's cave and someone said, "Would you just look at yourself. See yourself. Judge yourself. Find yourself." Well, I'd look at the shadow and say, "There I am. I am that particular dark thing, for that thing expresses my will." I move, and it moves.

I move, and it moves, so I think that's me—the me I make. And yet, the me I make, is not me, but a shadow of me.

I watch that me and I think, "That me is free."

[Peter moves around freely and his shadow moves as well.]

But if it's free, it's only free to do nothing for it is nothing. It's free to move nothing around. What am I doing? Nothing...I'm moving nothing around.

Some say that we all have "free will."

Well, we're all free to will nothing in different ways.

We're all free to do nothing but not free to do something, for a shadow can't shine light or bear the fruit of light. Jesus is Light. He said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing."

[Peter turns off the spotlight and faces the congregation.]

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So the me I make:

Is free to make darkness but not free to shine light.

Is free to not love but not free to love.

Is free to choose evil but not to choose the good.

The me I make can do nothing but covet. (Which is actually nothing)

The me I make can do nothing but want. (Which is actually nothing)

The me I make is actually nothing...but an empty space in light.

The me I make is an illusion—a bad dream that I dream of me.

If I am that me that I think I make, there is no hope.

Epiphany:

Paul writes: "At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."

He already wrote: "Put off the old man, corrupted by deceitful desires, and put on the new man already created in true righteousness and holiness." "Already!"

"At one time you were darkness."



You know light defines darkness and judges darkness. My shadow is defined by the light around it. The light is the substance and the shadow is its absence.

And this is counter intuitive for us, but if space and time are created realities, dependent on light somehow, then there would be no space or time for darkness, if not for light.

God is Light, and God made space and time.  
God, who is Light, made time for darkness.

I'm just saying that Light is Eternal  
and darkness is temporal,  
it had a beginning and does have an End.

The Beginning and the End are the Light.

"At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."

In time, you are darkness, but you are eternal light in the Lord. And now is the day of salvation—the moment you believe Eternity touches time, and that moment is NOW; Eternal Life is now.

"At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."

And how does Paul know that those who hear this word are light in the Lord?  
Because the Word he speaks is Judgment... and Creation...and Life...and Light.  
Jesus said, "You are already made clean by the word I have spoken to you."  
(John 15:3)  
So if you hear the Word, you can know you are light and light is eternal.

Now this utterly blows my mind: Paul sure seems to be saying you have an eternal you, not just lasting forever, but not even stuck in time. He already said that we were chosen in Christ Jesus from the foundation of the world and that we are already "seated in the heavenly places with Christ." So you see: The moment God began to make you in time, you were already finished in Christ and at home with the Father.

So you are created in time and revealed in time, yet eternally secure and at home in Christ with the Father. You are an eternally new man and a temporal old man. You are light in the Lord and *were* darkness, which brings me back to this question: Can God who is Light make darkness?

Can God who is Love make "not love?"  
Can God who is Good make evil?

In other words, can God will what He does not will? I don't think so.

But maybe God could will to make creatures that would will what He does not will, and thus know what He does not will, and thus be able to one day will what He wills in freedom:

Creatures that know evil but will the good,  
Creatures that know not God but forever choose God,  
Creatures that know darkness but forever choose the Light.

It seems that in order to do that He'd have to find a way to make darkness and then fill it with Light.

But how could God, who is Light, make darkness?

How could a star like our Sun make night?

The Sun can't make night, but maybe the Sun can make the earth, and then the sun could shine on the earth and the earth would cast a shadow and that would be night.

Maybe God can't make evil, but God can make Peter, and Peter might cast a shadow. See? Maybe my old man is a shadow cast by the creation of my New Man or the revelation of my New Man—Eternal Man. Maybe this man that I think I have created, with cheeseburgers and hard work: Rev. Peter Hiatt with an M. Div. degree and two books published, who covets more books published and lusts for more pleasures than he currently has and is never satisfied and is usually grumpy, maybe this man that I think I have created is just a temporal shadow of what God has already created and is revealing in time.

“Whatever is exposed to the light becomes light.” So maybe the shadow that I have created, the empty space I have created with my self-centered arrogant dreams is the very space in which God reveals His dream, and His dream is me in His image, loving Him eternally in freedom.

This is the epiphany: I was darkness, and I have created an entire world of darkness. Yet, I have inherited a new world filled with light, a new heaven and a new earth, filled with the glory of God. I am filled with the glory of God and God is Light.

If I stand in the light, I create darkness,  
but if I ingest the light,  
I become light and there are no more shadows.

If I put me in the spotlight, I cast a shadow,  
but if I put the spotlight in me there are no shadows,  
and I have knowledge of the dark, but now there is no dark.

I have knowledge of evil but constantly choose the good—I love.  
...“irresponsibly responsible,” in the image of God.

Not just in light, but in-Lightened, the Light in me.

Maybe that's why we were born into this world.

Maybe that's the purpose of these evil days, that we would be enlightened.

Maybe that's the process of my salvation and creation in the image of God.

Well, today if you see your shadow, you don't have to hide the darkness in more darkness. In joy, you can expose the darkness to light and it will become light, and you will see that you are truly clean, and if you believe you are clean you might not want to roll in the mud.

Epiphany: I don't have to hide my darkness for it's...*not* who I am...but who I *was*.  
But if I think darkness is who I am, nothing is as terrifying as the light. For what happens when darkness is exposed to light?

[Peter turns on the spotlight and then faces the sheet. He holds a flashlight and shines it on his shadow while saying the following:]

"Ahhhhh! I'm melting."

Light annihilates darkness.

Light is wrath on "the sons of disobedience," the old man, the shadow man, the false man.

Light annihilates darkness. Darkness cannot "inherit" inherit the Light.

Light is wrath on "the sons of disobedience,"

Light annihilates darkness and one day I will feel like I'm being annihilated; I will lose my mind, my brain, my *psyche*, like it's blown right out of my head and my old body will be consumed by eternal fire, it will "spontaneously combust." My old man will totally fail; he will die. The me that I think I created with my will and my work and my dreams (that dark me)

...will be filled with uncreated light.

...And then I'll laugh like I've never laughed and begin to party and

....The worst day will become the best day, the Eternal Day.

And it can begin right now, when eternity invades time as faith. When the eyes of the heart are enlightened. Then I no longer dream my own dreams, I dream God's dreams and His dreams are called reality, not shadow but light.

Old Ramirez was crippled and lying alone in his bed. He looked out the window and saw his enemy climbing the hill to his house. He couldn't run, and there was no one to help. He'd lived a life of lust and greed, and now he could no longer deny his crimes. His enemy broke through the door, went straight to the bedroom, pulled out a gun and said, "Romirez it's time to pay." Romirez said, "Borgia I'm a different man." and Borgia said, "Nothing will stop me from getting revenge and there's absolutely nothing you can do." Romirez said, "Well, actually, yes there is." and Borgia said, "What's that?" Ramirez replied, "I can wake up." And he did, and that's enlightenment.

When the enemy tells you: "There's nothing you can do about it." There is something you can do; you can wake up. "You were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."  
Ephesians 5:14

"Awake o sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will epiphany you."

God is Light, and Jesus is the Light of the world.

[Peter turns the spotlight on again, turns towards the sheet, which is covering the cross, stretches out his as if his shadow is being crucified and speaks:]

At the cross, Jesus annihilates my old man and Jesus is the New Man. Jesus is Light.

The shadow isn't truly real, but the pain associated with the shadow is real; it's like a wound in the light. A shadow can't wound the light, but to make space and time for me the Light is wounded. We are made at a wound in the Light,  
at a wound in the side of the ultimate Adam,  
at the Savior's side.

Look at the wound, that shadow, it's shaped like me.

At the cross Jesus annihilated my old man.

[The spotlight is turned off, and the sheet is removed, underneath the cross is revealed.]

And Jesus is my New Man, Jesus is the Light!

### **Communion**

Well, to awaken from our dreams, we must trust the Light. So Jesus (the Light) entered our darkness; He descended into all our evil dreams and there on the night, the darkest night, when He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body broken for you; eat it. Look, the Light shines in the darkness. In the same manor, after giving thanks, He took the cup saying, "This is my blood shed for you; drink it." This is the Light. Maybe this is why you were born into this world to see this, in order that you might be in-Lightened. So come to the table, take the Light and whisper to yourself: "Let there be Light in my darkness; let there be me, the real me."

### **Prayer**

Let's pray together: "Father I am empty, I am a sinner, at least I was a sinner until this moment. I confess to you my darkness. Now Father let there be Light. And now I want you to listen to the word of God: "At one time, you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." Believe the gospel.

### **Benediction**

Let there be Light in Jesus' name, Amen

If you thought this sermon was complicated, I know it's complicated on one level, but on another level it's profoundly simple. Everything is just about getting you to say, from the bottom of your heart, "Let there be light." When you say, "Let there be light," you agree with God in the very beginning of the Bible.

In the beginning of the Bible, there's this empty formless void of darkness and God says, "Let there be light." Which is like Him saying: "Let there be Me." Whenever the light goes into the world it's like we're saying, "Let there be Jesus."

When you say let there be light you agree with God.  
But whenever we sin what are we saying? We're saying let there be darkness. Whenever it's me in the spotlight...whenever *I'm* the point I make darkness.

But what is salvation? It's simply saying, "Ok God I think your dreams are better than my dreams. So let there be Light!" And for all eternity you agree with God, and that's life, and your Father is good  
So when you're tempted, and you struggle with your shadow remember that God makes everything new, and every moment can be made new, and all you have to say is, "God let there be light. It's a process; it takes a lifetime, but God will do it because He has done it; He's eternal. In Jesus' name believe the gospel, walk in the light even now as He is in the light, better yet become the light!

*Disclaimer: The following document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*