

Ephesians 5:8-14. 9 a Pent. 17.7.2016

Living as people of the Light!

⁸ For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! ⁹ For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

¹⁰ Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. ¹³ But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, ¹⁴ for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said,

“Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” [NLT]

It's been quite some time since we have had load-shedding - almost long enough ago to have put it out of mind. I am sure that we don't need to do a survey to find that we all prefer coming home in the evenings and being able to switch on the light, rather than having to look for a candle or a torch.

Light is something we have become accustomed to - especially in the cities, and when the street lights are out, the darkness can be quite overpowering. It is a darkness where danger might lurk unseen, and which for many is a source of anxiety.

Light shining in the midst of darkness - with the coming of Jesus Christ into our world a new light of hope and peace with God shone into the darkness of a world which had lost its way with God. For us today, it is about this light which God shines on our world, and that we

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Having light - that is not just a matter of being able to switch on lights, or even of being able to light a candle when there is no electricity. There is a darkness which Paul refers to in the opening verses of this chapter, as he points out how our life should not be, and then says, **For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light!**

Being filled with light - that is not something we are able to do on our own. This light came to us - it is to be found in the person of Jesus Christ, who says

of himself: **“I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”** (John 8:12). He has brought this light into our lives.

The light of Christ - his love - fills us! Is that really true for you and me? We need to understand this is not simply about what we see in ourselves, but that we recognise what he has given us. We are not to produce light, but to glow with the light that Christ shines into us. That is why the apostle does not say: you must be good and righteous and truthful, but **this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.**

After all, as Christians we are not better than other people, but the goodness of God has truly changed us. This goodness is to be the basis on which we meet others: to show them goodness rather than constantly finding fault with them. God does not show us his goodness because we are perfect. The good God comes to us and raises us up from our imperfections.

This goodness is a result of the **righteousness**, which has been given to us. Because we have received the righteousness of God - because our relationship with God has been put right! - we no longer live in fear, and do not have to cling to things we believe we must have. Above all, being brought back to God - receiving his forgiveness - enables us to forgive those who have offended us or done terrible things to us. But also: now we are able to acknowledge our errors, and to ask for forgiveness.

This in turn makes it possible for us to have **truth** as the basis of all our relationships. We do not have to try to be somebody we are not. We do not have to put on a show to impress others. We may simply be the people we have been called to be, because he who is the truth has taken over our lives. It is his truth which changes us.

Being filled with the light of Christ - that is only possible if we are connected to the light grid. The good news is that there is no 'load-shedding' - God's

power is at work in our lives to connect us to the source of light. This connection was made in our Baptism - there the **light from the Lord** was turned on in your and my life. We are not the source of the light, but have been called to 'live in the light' - the choice is ours whether we live in darkness or in the **light from the Lord**.

Living as people of the light - how do we do that? One way to remain in the light, is given by what Paul writes here: **Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord**. We have become a society which is mainly concerned with what pleases us - with having as much fun as possible. That is the inevitable road into darkness again - the darkness of selfishness and disregard for the needs of those around us. As those who have been filled with the light of the Lord, the main aim of life is therefore not about just having as much fun as we can, but about that which **is pleasing to the Lord**.

What is pleasing to the Lord is that we do not live by the standards of our world. What pleases him is that we stand out as beacons of light - as lighthouses - in a world that lives in darkness in spite of the many bright lights (or perhaps because of them).

Lighthouses have been important beacons of light throughout the centuries as they have saved the lives of countless people. It may be interesting to visit a lighthouse during the day - especially those which have a long history. But lighthouses fulfill their true purpose in the dark - especially when there is stormy weather. The lighthouse does not shine its light for itself, but for those who need to be warned of the danger of hidden rocks or sandbanks that lurks, and which would threaten their lives.

As we live lives pleasing to our Lord, we may take on the function of a lighthouse for people around us, to give a warning of the dangers that lurk, so that lives may be saved. Throughout the centuries of church history there have been times of darkness, when light had to be shone on the lives of the people - and God sent those whom he had gifted to be this light. Such people may serve as examples to us today.

One such example was given by Beyers Naudé, who spoke out against the evils of the apartheid system. He did this not only from a political point of view, but rather from the point of view that before God "**There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.**" (Galatians 3:28) Before God the differences of race have no bearing - and the same has to apply in the church. And yet, it needed people of courage like Beyers Naudé to stand up and - by living as people of the light - making it clear what it is that pleases God in our time!

Living as people of the light will not always make us the most popular person on the block - the attraction of the darkness is great, and Satan, the prince of darkness, will do all he can to discourage us from living in the light. Yet the question that faces us - the choice we have to make between darkness and light - is remarkably simple. Surely no one prefers living in the darkness, when we can live in the light of the Lord.