

Live As Children of Light

☞ **You were once darkness. (vv.8,11-12,14)**
☞ **Now you are light in the Lord. (vv.8-10,13-14)**

In the Name of Jesus, the Light of the world, dear **Children of Light**:

The story is told of a seminary student and his wife struggling financially. Always a challenge, but more so now with extreme student debt. They went to see the Seminary President who asked them what might seem to be a very strange question: “Are you remembering the Lord with the firstfruits of your offerings?” The student was somewhat baffled. How could giving first to the Lord help their financial situation? “I’m studying to become a pastor and give my life to the Lord and His work,” the young man answered. “My wife will have to give up many things too. Isn’t that enough?”

Before I share the Seminary President’s response, look how true the student proved Luther’s old observation. *Man is converted in three stages: first, his head; then his heart, finally his wallet.* Notice something else. Sometimes very much against our sanctified will, when we’re really trying to do good, all of us slip up. There’s something still so wrong with us Christians that we need our Lord to remind us again today through His holy apostle: **Live As Children of Light**. One reason still wants to bite us:

☞ **You were once darkness. (vv.8,11-12,14)**

Darkness is like a rabid wolf stalking anyone who’s distracted. **Darkness** will try to take you down and rob you of all your joy and peace. It’s like a friend’s husky. While I was talking to a family member in their driveway, Old Blue quietly came up behind me. Without so much as a low growl, he bit one leg, and before I could turn around, nailed the other. No blood, just bruises. Worse, his owners barely noticed. All I heard from my friends, “He’s not usually out of his kennel.” Thanks so much!

Looking back on the way we were, think first of the miracle needed to convert your head from **darkness** to light. Everyone in law enforcement and the military talks about “getting your head right.” Or in sports it’s “getting your head in the game.” Spiritually speaking, “*You were once darkness.*”¹ Not *stuck in darkness* or *seeing darkness*, but “*You were once darkness itself.*” As **darkness**, you can’t escape from the pitch black cave of immorality and unbelief. But have you noticed how **darkness** insists on its own morality and condemns anyone who dares to disagree? Stuck on *Me-Myself-and-I*, you can barely breath. If you’re not the most popular in school, or you’re not advancing at work – passed over for promotion or that part in a play or position on a team, watch out! Some of the saddest stories of teen suicides were about smart, good looking, popular kids overcome by **darkness**. “*Once your were....*”

Darkness didn’t stop with your head; it kept seeping down into your heart. Teen years came, and no matter what your folks said or tried, you always got angry. Not that you knew how to make it right, but **darkness** is so frustrating. Getting married only helps half the population for about a day. A few weeks after the wedding, they’re wondering who they married. In the **darkness** broken hearts lash out at everything, even blaming marriage itself. Some try multiple marriages or living together, “friends with benefits,” but **darkness** keeps pointing the finger and piling up more baggage on your heart. **Darkness** is moral depravity...despair...spiritually sleeping away toward total **darkness** come the Judgment Day.

Some don't even want to talk about their wallet, but they're always thinking about it. If on some rare occasion they sense a little light in there, the **darkness** always returns to steal the joy. One man said

¹ *Evangelical Heritage Version, EHV*® © 2017 The Wartburg Project. www.wartburgproject.org. Quotes unless noted.

everything was going fine, but he was afraid “when the next shoe would drop.” How many pirates ever thought they had enough gold? How many bulging wallets can guard themselves from getting lost or stolen? How many wealthy investors can’t enjoy their earnings, but cry when the Stock Market “adjusts.” As brokers spin it: “Stay the course....in it for the long haul.” But brokers keep getting paid your fees as your assets dry up. **Darkness** can only ultimately doom your wallet because hearses don’t have trailers.

Job said it like this, *“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”* (1:21 NIV84) Wait a minute! Job was not crushed by his losses? Even when the Prince of Darkness attacked his health, Job refused to *“curse God and die.”* (2:9) In his darkest hour Job trusted, *“[God] knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.”* (23:10 NIV84) Hope may be flickering like a candle in the wind, but Job will not let dark despair crush him. Job cries out, *“Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”* (19:23–27) **Once darkness, but be what you are.**

Now you are light in the Lord. (vv.8-10,13-14)

In spite of a full court press by **darkness** with fanatic fans from hell blazing away at him, Job could see the light of his kinsman **Redeemer**, that great Champion of our souls. In his Gospel account the beloved disciple John takes us back to Genesis when the Holy Spirit inspired him to write:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” – has not taken it down, has not overcome it. (John 1:1–5 NIV84)

First **the Lord** converts your *head* by shining the **light** of God’s truth. Jesus, God’s own Son, shed His blood to rescue. He says, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* (John 14:6) *“The fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. ¹⁰Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord, ¹¹and do not participate in fruitless deeds of darkness. Instead, expose them.”* More literally it says, *“Test what is pleasing to the Lord.”* Throughout the Bible the LORD God is telling us what pleases Him and what does not. **Children of the Light** know God’s anger at homosexuality, but also against heterosexual sins, greed, anger, quarrelling, sibling rivalry, selfish ambition, violence or anti-government activism. God’s *“word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”* (Psalm 119:105) Don’t back down from the **darkness; Now you are light in the Lord.**

Converted hearts reflect God’s honor on parents and authorities. One of my fellow campers was so dark she could disappear when all of us were playing, “Hide and Seek.” Once she shouted, “You guys can’t see me. Here! I’ll smile!” Smiles pierce the **darkness** for husbands and wives as well. **Children of Light** can’t create it. Like a flashlight on pearly whites, we all can only reflect the **Light**. But when the **light** shines, you instinctively look. *“We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”* (2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV84) Eyes on Jesus we **light** up to love and honor as we promised.

As **the Lord** lights up your wallet with wisdom and grace, everything improves. That seminary student and his wife started giving the Lord their first gifts of thanks. The Lord reduced expenses, increased income, plus gave twin gifts: *“Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.”* One sister said she could enjoy God’s gifts so much more when she put Him first. **Light** up with God’s promise: *“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”* (1 Timothy 6:6–8; Matthew 6:33 NIV84) **Live As Children of Light.** Amen.