

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	59		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Ephesians 2:8-10; 5:8-14; Romans 13:11-14		
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The Christian Walk

32. Lord's Day

Question 86. Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace, through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we still do good works?

Answer: Because Christ, having redeemed and delivered us by his blood, also renews us by his Holy Spirit, after his own image, that so we may testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God for his blessings, (a) and that he may be praised by us; (b) also, that every one may be assured in himself of his faith, (c) by the fruits thereof; and that, by our godly conversation others may be gained to Christ. (d)

(a) Rom.6:13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Rom.12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Rom.12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. 1 Pet.2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 1 Pet.2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: 1 Pet.2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 1 Cor.6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (b) Matt.5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. 1 Pet.2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Pet.1:6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 1 Pet.1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (c) 2 Pet.1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: Matt.7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Gal.5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Gal.5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Gal.5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (d) 1 Pet.3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; 1 Pet.3:2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Rom.14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which

make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

“Repentance,” wrote J.C. Ryle, “is a thorough change of man’s natural heart upon the subject of sin. We are all born in sin. We naturally love sin. We take to sin, as soon as we can act and think, as the bird takes to flying, and the fish takes to swimming. There never was a child that required schooling, or education in order to learn deceitfulness, sensuality, passion, self-will, gluttony, pride, and foolishness. These things are not picked up from bad companions, or gradually learned by a long course of tedious instruction. They spring up of themselves, even when boys and girls are brought up alone. The seeds of them are evidently the natural product of the heart. The aptitude of all children to these things is an unanswerable proof of the corruption and fall of man. Now when this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Ghost, when this natural love of sin is cast out, then takes place that change which the Word of God calls *repentance*. The man in whom the change is wrought is said to *repent*. He may be called, in one word, a *penitent* man.”¹ Paul has declared the believer’s great position in Christ with all the privileges that go with it in chapters 1-3. The remaining three chapters constitute his exhortations to conform to what you are. His language is strong; he repeatedly uses the imperative mode to drive his admonitions and prohibitions home. His key word in this section is “walk”; believers are to “walk worthy of their calling” (4:1); they must not “walk like the Gentiles” (4:17); they must “walk in love” (5:2). He now directs their attention to “walking in the light” (5:8). What does he mean? What is “the light”?

I. THE CONTRAST: BEFORE AND AFTER (vv. 8, 9)

The Apostle Paul frequently uses this method in his epistles. Chapter 2 represents a good example. He never tired of pointing out the great transition from the old to the new, from death to life, from darkness to light (comp. I Thessalonians 5:4ff).

A. The Past

You were once darkness. The verb *were* (ἜΤΕ, imperfect, stressing continual past action) is in the emphatic position in the Greek text. Darkness refers to their once total sphere of living. Darkness controlled their behavior. All that they did was conducted in darkness. Not only IN darkness, they WERE darkness. The word darkness, SKOTOS, refers to moral and mental blackness (comp. 4:18). It is a word that is synonymous with ignorance (cf. II Corinthians 4:3-6).

B. The Present

But now, one of Paul’s favorite phrases (cf. Romans 3:21), you are light in the Lord. NOTICE: The light did not originate in them. Believers do not possess light in themselves, it is from outside of themselves (comp. John 8:12; I John 3:1).

C. The Imperative

Live as children of light. The word translated live in the NIV is PERIPATEITE, used in the imperative mood, lit. walk. While speaking of their position and privilege the Apostle has called them light itself: now that he comes to speak of their conduct, he returns to this metaphor of “walking.”²

D. The Results

For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth. Light produces certain characteristics. It will naturally do so; it need not be forced (cf. Galatians 5:22). *GOODNESS* – has reference to personal character; *RIGHTEOUSNESS* – in relationship to our social dealings; *TRUTH* – the ruling principle of all conduct, stressing obligation in all facets of life.

II. THE ATTITUDE: DISCERNMENT (vv. 10-12)

As darkness parallels ignorance, so light corresponds to “understanding.” All believers, regardless of I.Q., have had “the eyes of their understanding enlightened” (1:18). They have “an anointing” from God (I John 2:27) so as to be able to receive spiritual truth. The natural man has no such ability (I Corinthians 2:14). This does not mean that somehow apart from our own endeavors to study the word of God (cf. I Timothy 4:13-16) we will grow in our understanding of spiritual truth. It will never happen.

A. The Expectation

“Find out what pleases the Lord.” The word translated “find out” is DOKIMAZŌ, to approve after examination, to arrange and execute a test, to accept and heed the results of a test, to carry out a careful examination, to discover through personal experience and effort. This involves our minds and our wills. Discovering the will of God is no accident. Our understanding is involved (comp. 5:17). But it is also a moral issue involving our wills. “What pleases the Lord,” EUARESTOS, well-pleasing, acceptable (cf. Romans 14:18; II Corinthians 5:9).

B. The Separation

“Have nothing to do” is the word SUNGKOINŌNEITE, a present imperative, literally no fellowship, partnership, close association, “with the fruitless deeds of darkness,” compare Galatians 5:19ff and Romans 2:7.

C. The Exposure

“But rather expose them,” ELEGCHETE, present imperative, literally to convict or convince, to reprove, correct. Same word used of the Holy Spirit in John 16:8-11. Testing issues in the approval of the good and in the exposure of the evil. The believer must not only avoid evil, he must also expose it.

D. The Reason

“For it is shameful,” AISCHRON, literally disgrace (cf. I Corinthians 11:6) “even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.” It is the property of light to dispel darkness. The exposure is accomplished more by our lives (v. 9) than by our words.

III. THE PROCESS: MANIFESTATION AND DEMONSTRATION (vv. 13-14)

“A man who receives the light of Christ reflects it. He cannot receive it except so far as he has affinity with it, and he cannot receive it without reflecting it. The light is itself a purifying force. When it acts it brings out all that is able to sustain its presence.”³ What effect does the light have?

A. Manifestation

It shows the true nature of sin. The light reveals the obscure and hidden. When “exposed,” PHANEROŌ, literally to make clear, to make known, to become visible, revealed.

B. Demonstration

The light declares the sons of God. Light transforms. Paul makes reference to Isaiah 26:19 and 60:1 to illustrate the power of the light. Some have used this text to teach that the natural man has the ability (free-will) to respond to the Gospel. This ignores the context. Paul is declaring the power of the light (v. 14a). He is NOT stressing the power of the dead, who have no power.

CONCLUSION: Paul confronted people with the truth... and with its implications. To begin with, obedience to God's will involves sharp separation from the world. The world is in darkness as Calvin declared, "Again, in this world there is nothing but pitch darkness, and even so thick that we do not know how to step one pace without tumbling, or without straying out of our way. Therefore, it is necessary for us to be guided, and that our Lord Jesus Christ shows us the way. This is what St. Paul shows us here, and how our Lord Jesus enlightens us. It is not only that we are dim-sighted, and that he helps us and supplies the lack that is in us, but also that we are stark blind, yes and dead; in short, we are in the pit of hell. When a corpse is laid in the grave, men may bring candles and torches to it, but it never sees the more for all that. So then, our Lord Jesus imparts his light to us, not to make us see more clearly than we did before, but to give us our whole eyesight again, seeing that we are stark blind. Now then, seeing that Jesus Christ speaks in this way and continues day by day to waken us and make us see more clearly, ought we not to follow his example and restrain our neighbours as much as we can when we see them straying to their destruction?"⁴

¹ J.C. Ryle, *Old Paths* (rpt. James Clark, 1972), p. 405.

² J.A. Robinson, *Commentary on Ephesians: Exposition of the Greek Text* (rpt. Kregel, 1979), p. 120.

³ B.F. Westcott, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Macmillan, 1906), p. 271.

⁴ J. Calvin, *Sermons On the Epistle to the Ephesians* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1973), p. 533.