

## **“Brought to Light” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent 4 March 15, 2026**

- I. **Ephesians 5:8-14** – previously read
- II. **As a kid, I loved to explore and play outside.**
  - a. Many of us older adults lament the fact that kids today are stuck inside in front of a screen rather than running around outside.
    - i. Here is a little something to remember as a kid... when you turn over a rock or old piece of lumber, and you saw all kinds of bugs... centipedes, spiders, beetles, ants, and worms...
      - 1. I suppose if you lived in some areas, you might find dangerous creatures like scorpions, black widows, or poisonous snakes.
    - ii. And what do these creatures do when you expose them to the light?
      - 1. They try to get back to the darkness as fast as possible.
  - b. Sadly, that’s the same kind of thing the Bible writes about us as we scurry for cover to hide the sin in us... seeking the cover of darkness... running from the gaze of whoever might be watching.
    - i. I read a story from Dallas Willard about a 2-year-old little girl making mud pies which she called “warm chocolate” – and her Nana got her all cleaned up and told her it’s time to stop.
    - ii. Once they got back outside, the little girl told her Nana to turn around and stop watching... of course Nana was a pushover, so she turned around as her granddaughter directed, glancing back occasionally.
    - iii. The little girl started making mud pies again... and several times turned around to tell her Nana, “Please don’t look, okay?” as she did what she was not supposed to do.
    - iv. Unfortunately, that is the same thing we say to God as we sin against Him and our neighbor... “Please don’t look, okay?”
      - 1. That is what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden, as they hid themselves away and God called out to them, “Where are you?”<sup>1</sup>
      - 2. Even today, we don’t want anyone to see our sin, to have our sin exposed... as we scurry for the cover of darkness as though God won’t be able to see.
      - 3. The truth is, we are the ones who can’t see... as we are blind to the nature of sin and how much it hurts us and those around us.
      - 4. We are blind to the price that was paid for our sins... and the length God was willing to go for our redemption.
- III. **The Bible tells us that we left the old way of life** when Jesus saved us.
  - a. In the verses leading up to our reading today, Paul describes a life that is the opposite of walking in Christ:
    - i. Things like sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, crude joking... “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... because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience... Do not become partners with them.” (Ephesians 5:3-7)

ii. Then, in our reading today, it says, “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.” (v 11)

1. The unfruitful works are the “anti-fruit” of sin and brokenness that any of us can fall for... any of us can fall back into.

b. The Ephesian church is surrounded by pagan idolatry and all kinds of societal ills – as Paul says, “it is shameful to even speak about the things they do in secret.” (v 12)

i. As the congregation practiced their vocations in their place of work, at home, and in Ephesus, they were exposed to all kinds of immorality and evil practices.

ii. They were told not to have koinonia, or not to have fellowship with these “works of darkness” but shine light on them... expose them.

iii. In a way, turn over the rock, the piece of wood and shine the light of day on them... using the light of God’s Word.

iv. God’s Word is shined on the world and its standards to expose them.

IV. **And yet, the evil we are called to expose can sometimes be in us...**

a. On the outside we shake our heads at the evil around us, totally blind to the evil that resides in us.

i. There are parts of our lives we gladly show the world.... But there are also parts we carefully keep in the dark... places where we silently say to God, “Please don’t look.”

b. In our own time, one of the most common “works of darkness” is not done in public at all... it happens quietly behind a screen... late at night... or when no one else is watching.

i. The Internet has made this temptation constant... and private... as people of all ages struggle in secret.

ii. Pornography thrives in darkness... and is almost always hidden... think hidden browsing histories, hidden phones and apps, and hidden habits.

iii. It is probably one of the clearest examples in our time of something people do while silently hoping no one will ever find out... and the quiet prayer of the heart is, “Please don’t look.”

c. Others are in the darkness of addiction – another example of trying to hide the truth in darkness.

i. One of the first things that getting sober from an addiction includes is being honest... getting honest with the massive lie that addicts and alcoholics live while hiding their destructive behavior.

1. In other words, bring to light the darkness of hidden drinking... using... pretending everything is fine when the inside is full of darkness and pain.
  2. Bottles are hidden... Stories are made up... pain and fear are hidden by the effects of substances.
- ii. Addiction often grows in places of deep pain... as someone might look fine on the outside... working, raising a family, big smiles at church... but inside there may be loneliness, shame, or despair.
  - iii. Any addiction becomes a way to escape the darkness for a moment... but it only makes the darkness deeper.
- d. The hidden parts of our lives are the places we say, "Please don't look."
- i. Please don't look at the hidden bottles... don't look at the hidden pills... don't look at the browsing history... don't look at the money spent on addiction...
  - ii. Yet God in all His mercy does more than look, He opens the eyes of the blind and brings them into the pure light of forgiveness.

V. **The Lord makes darkness into light.**

- a. "For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."
- i. A transformation took place in coming to faith... as God found a way to expose our darkness and make us into light.
  - ii. Anyone who has walked through the hopeless demoralization of addiction... the chains that seem impossible to break... when God frees them, He shows His power over all things... especially darkness.
  - iii. Anyone who walks through the secret sins that seem like they are only for us to know... God shows His power to deliver them from darkness.
  - iv. The first thing that happens is He opens our eyes to the unfruitful life... and we begin to see how far down the scale we have gone... the light shines into the darkness of our sin... and we cannot run or hide anymore.
- b. As the Gospel of John says about Jesus, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:4-5)
- i. Jesus, the Lord and Savior, sought us out just as God sought Adam and Eve in the Garden... as He Himself says, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10)
- c. Each of us who believe in Jesus are gifted eyes to see the unbelievable cost of the cross.
- i. How could I dwell in darkness, knowing that my Savior died for that?
  - ii. No, I rise up out of that darkness with His full forgiveness and life - His light that He shines into the darkest parts of my soul.

- iii. The Old Adam is drowned in the waters of baptism, and I walk in the light... in the truth... in Christ.
- d. The rocks have been turned over, the darkness exposed... but in Jesus Christ the light does not destroy us... it forgives us, heals us, and sends us out as people who no longer hide from God, but walk freely as children of light... Amen

<sup>1</sup> Source: John Ortberg, *God Is Closer Than You Think* (Zondervan, 2005), p. 40-41