

Ephesians 5:8–14: ⁸...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Divine Defense

INTRODUCTION

As we read our Epistle reading, there appears to be a moment when the Ephesians Christians went from darkness to light. You get that sense as you hear the apostle Paul say, “at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.”

At one time the Ephesian Christians were worse than in darkness. If you’re in the dark, you just stumble around and don’t know where you’re going. But Paul says they were darkness—a sense that they were by nature evil. In Holy Scripture, that which opposes God is darkness (Luke 22:53); the realm of Satan is called darkness (Eph. 6:12); and the place where unbelievers are punished forever is a place that Jesus calls the outer darkness—a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 25:30).

Darkness isn’t a good thing to be. Darkness means you’re blind to who Christ is, as in the Gospel reading were the Jews had physical sight, but couldn’t see who Jesus is—but a blind man who lacked physical sight had the eyes of faith. Darkness means you’re dead in your trespasses and sins—a lost and condemned sinner. Darkness means you embrace the ways of the world, which lead to death, and not the way of Christ, which leads to life.

But now the Ephesians Christians are light in Christ. Now, they walk as Children of Light, embracing what is good and right and true in God's eyes. Now, they have the eyes of faith to see Jesus as God's Son and Savior of the world.

Today, you witnessed Kinley Abigail Griffith cross that threshold from darkness to light, going from a child of darkness to a child of the Light. Today, you witnessed the Holy Spirit raise Kinley from the darkness of spiritual death to the light of everlasting life in Christ Jesus.

GOD NOT ONLY SAVES YOU FROM THE DARKNESS OF SIN AND DEATH IN HOLY BAPTISM BY BRINGING YOU INTO THE LIGHT OF CHRIST, HE GIVES YOU BAPTISM AS DIVINE DEFENSE AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL DANGERS OF DARKNESS.

I. Baptism as injection of divine promises.

First and foremost, Baptism is divine defense against the spiritual dangers of the world because in Baptism God injects you with the blessings of His divine promises.

A doctor injects you with a vaccine that helps your body fight infections—although this year it's pretty clear they missed with the flu virus. Now, a vaccine doesn't stop you from getting an infection—the flu can still enter your body—but the vaccine helps your body destroy the flu virus once it invades.

In Holy Baptism, God injects you with the promise that your sins are forgiven for the sake of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is divine defense because Satan, the world and your sinful nature will tempt you to sin—and because we're all sinners, we will sin. But in Baptism, you have died to the power of sin to condemn you because you have died to sin's power in Christ—the sinful nature has been buried with Christ in a watery death and a new person arises in Christ. And when you do sin, your Baptism assures you of God's promise that for all who repent and believe in Jesus there is full forgiveness.

And it can't be said often enough: where there is forgiveness of sin, there is life and salvation.

Another gift of Baptism that acts as a divine defense is that in baptism, God puts His name on you and calls you His own. Today, Kinley was baptized into the Name of Triune God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God put His name on her and called her His own. As a child of God who has put on Christ in Baptism, she is now under God's divine care and protection—and God's holy angels now watch over her.

II. Baptism as injection of spiritual insight/wisdom.

Second, Baptism is divine defense because in those Holy Waters you receive a divine injection of spiritual wisdom and insight. Another way to put it is this: As Baptized believers you are enlightened—that means you are in the light—you have the light of Christ in you, as Paul says in our text: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

You have this injection of spiritual insight and wisdom because you have the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is one of the blessings of Baptism. Because you have the Holy Spirit, you know God—you know how He thinks. Paul writes in First Corinthians, “For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.”

As the Holy Spirit comes to you through Water and the Word, He gives you insight into the mind of God and as He reveals the Word of God to you. Resurrected from spiritual deadness the Word of God is no longer a dark book to you, it is God's gift to discern what is pleasing to the Lord—what is good and right and true.

Baptism is divine defense because having the Spirit and the Word, you know the truth—the truth that sets you free from the world’s darkness and lies. And using God’s Word you are able to do even more—you are able to expose the shameful and unfruitful works of darkness before they can hurt you or your loved ones.

III. Baptism as injection of courage to live as God’s people.

Someone once said, “In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.” We live in a world of darkness and sin—a world that quickly punishes anyone who doesn’t follow it. Yet, in our text, Paul says all Christians, “but now you are light in the Lord—walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”

It takes courage to walk in the light of the Lord in a world that wants you to walk in the darkness of sin and death. It takes courage to shine the light of God’s truth in a world filled with Satan’s lie. It takes courage to oppose the killing of unborn children. It takes courage to stand for the Biblical teaching of marriage. It takes courage to stand on the sixth commandment in a world bent on sexual gratification. It takes courage to believe in Jesus Christ as the world’s Savior in the face of persecution.

But, as baptized believers, you have a third component of divine defense: You are encouraged by God—that means that God gives you an injection of courage that enables you to live courageously as His people—to walk as Children of Light—to take your stand against the powers of darkness.

Fear is a pagan thing: Fear of the unknown; fear of nature; fear of one’s enemies; fear of death. That’s why the pagans created idols and sacrifice to them. They were afraid of the sun and

the moon—and the rest of creation. They were afraid of the future and the unknown—and they were especially afraid of death.

But Christians need not fear because we know—through the infusion of spiritual insight!—that God created this world for us. The sun and moon serve us. We don't fear the future because we trust God who's already been there. And we don't fear death, because we have a God who can raise the dead as the resurrection of Jesus proves. You have this injection of spiritual courage because you have a God who can raise the dead.

Unbelievers live once, but die twice. But baptized believers die once and live twice—you live now in Christ and in the Resurrection you will live again with Christ! Knowing that God will raise you up on the Last Day gives you all the courage in the world to live as His people!

CONCLUSION:

I have heard and read it many times: When Luther was tempted by the devil; when he was in doubt, depression, or near-despair, he would look at the words that he had written in chalk on his desk: “baptizatus sum” (Latin for “I am baptized”). Those words are a reminder that you are under God's divine defense—that you have died with Jesus to sin and risen with Him to newness of life, that God loves you as His child, that you have the gift of the Holy Spirit who has given you faith in Jesus, that you have the power to discern what is pleasing to God, and that you have the courage to walk as a child of the light—to be the living light of Christ in a dying world.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.