

State of the Church 2026

Ephesians 5:8-21

In last year's State of the Church message we considered how to act in a culture that treats the Bible, the gospel, and Christianity in general as a problem. "Negative world" refers to the period since 2014 when being known as a Christian is a social disadvantage. While we are not currently in the thick of a reformation and revival, the past year has seen a remarkable shift in the visibility and impact of the gospel. Many people have come or returned to the faith and we must pray, worship, and live so more will.

Summary of the Text

Paul's exhortation in verse eight follows his general command to imitate God as dear children and walk in love as Christ has loved us (v. 1). Those who once were darkness have become light in the Lord (v. 8). We therefore walk as children of light, and just as the light comes from God, so the fruit of goodness, righteousness, and truth grows by the Spirit's work in the believer (v. 9). This happens when you discern what pleases the Lord, meaning it takes effort to discover it (v. 10). While we bear the fruit of the Spirit, we're to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but instead expose them (v. 11). The things done in secret are shameful to entertain as options for the believer (v. 12). All the things that get exposed are exposed by light, and whatever is exposed becomes light (v. 13). Paul seems to be showing the power of light to both reveal and change the darkness. He quotes what some think is a hymn: "Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light'" (v. 14). Rise from the cold deadness of sin and walk in the warm life of Christ. This means walking wisely and not foolishly, taking care to redeem the time because the days are evil (vv. 15-16). Don't be unwise but discern the will of the Lord (v. 17). Don't be drunk with wine which is dissipation and excess but instead be filled with the Spirit (v. 18). What He pours into you will come out in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the melody originating in your heart where it is offered to God (v. 19). The believer is to give thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, submitting to one another not in the fear of men but in the fear of God (vv. 20-21).

Exposed by Light

Walking in the light empowers and emboldens believers to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (v. 11). The workers of darkness don't like this and Jesus told us why: "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (Jn. 3:19). He shined the light and therefore had conflict after conflict until He was executed. Whenever you stand against sin, however graciously and kindly you do it, there will be some kind of collision. In the past year we have seen an enormous exposure of darkness both inside and outside the Church. Megan Basham's prophetic book *Shepherds for Sale: How Evangelical Leaders Traded the Truth for a Leftist Agenda* was published in 2024 but its effect has increased. She exposed, for example, not just that the magazine *Christianity Today* has gone woke, catering to the world's view of gender, sexuality, race, and economics, which thinking Christians could see, but *why*. After Trump was first elected in 2016, the Lilly Endowment gave CT over \$2 million explicitly to shape Christian thought and another \$750k that year for a "faithful pastors" project. Basham reports this was nearly all the grants CT received and more than six times the amount of the previous year. The Lilly Endowment supports evangelical colleges and ministries that promote LGBTQIA+ ideologies, and CT took the money to that effect. Every staff donation from 2015-2022 went to Democratic candidates who are pro-abortion and against religious freedom and parental rights. This is just one example but it shows a little of the depth of the rot that has set in. What has come to light is that the same people who tell Bible-believing evangelicals to not mix religion and politics are doing exactly that while they are on the financial take for doing so. The light shows both evil men set against the gospel but also weak and foolish believers who have been compromised. It's hard to even begin to summarize the political

State of the Church 2026

Ephesians 5:8-21

revelations that have exploded since the Trump-Biden debate mid 2024. The open border, mainstream and social media censorship, 315,000 illegally certified votes in Fulton County, Georgia from the 2020 election (revealed two weeks ago), billions of dollars in Somali daycare fraud, and more scandals seemingly *ad infinitum*. The murder of Charlie Kirk revealed how many people are ok with someone being murdered with whom they politically disagree.

Redeeming the Time

It's alright if these things make your head spin. It's possible to waste an inordinate amount of time learning about the ubiquitous corruption across our culture and to be cluttered with conspiracy theories. It's harder to make this point in 2026 with all the conspiracy theories that have come true this past year, but it needs to be made anyway. Things were worse in Ionia where Ephesus was located, and still the apostle says be wise and redeem the time *because* the days are evil. Just because corruption looms everywhere doesn't mean you can be cynical, get drunk, and waste time. Instead, shine the light in your corner of the world, redeem the time, and advance the gospel. This is happening and we want it to happen more. James Baird lays out the case in his book *King of Kings* for why Christians should want a Christian government. Premise 1: Government must promote the public good (Rom. 13:4). Premise 2: As the only true religion, Christianity is part of the public good. Conclusion: Government must promote Christianity as the only true religion. For some time, secularism has been promoted as the one true religion, but since we are not secularists, we should want the Christian religion and biblical values like marriage, life, speech, freedom to start a business, and freedom of association to be protected by law. We have some Christians like Secretary of War Pete Hegseth advancing biblical morality in the military by banning gender dysphoria, requiring fitness, and honoring the country and thereby driving record recruitment numbers. We have also seen Pastor Douglas Wilson explaining in numerous interviews the basic tenets of Christian nationalism, which is that Christians should want their nation to be Christian. We are either going to have this or see what is happening to Seattle, Minneapolis, and San Francisco get worse and more common. But just yesterday in Washington the initiatives to Protect Girls' Sports and Restore the WA Parents' Bill of Rights gathered enough signatures to qualify as Initiatives to the Legislature. In our denomination, every week new churches are forming and others want to join, and we are asking the Lord to continue blessing us for His sake. When one church burns down, as Reformation Covenant Church just did, we wonder how the Lord will use it to bless the body and advance the gospel.

The Overflowing Heart

The Christian Church is the body of Christ with many parts that accomplish different tasks. We need every part, and each one should rejoice in the work of the others. When the Holy Spirit fills us, we minister to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs ringing out from our hearts (v. 19). It works this way because the Lord "inhabits the praises of Israel" (Ps. 22:3). We are giving the greatest gift we possibly could—the blessing of God Himself. When this happens, rather than being anxious or discouraged or distraught, we overflow with gratitude for everything all the time to our God and Father, and we submit to one another in Him (vv. 20-21). We are knit together and ready to shine the light.