

Light Become Darkness

Introduction

Our world today claims to be basking in the sunshine of unprecedented enlightenment, but I have my doubts that this assessment is true. I confess that enlightenment has been great in some areas of science, medicine, and communications, but I fear we are plunging more and more into darkness when it comes to obeying the law, respecting human rights, exercising wisdom, building character, and learning to love and serve one another to the glory of God.

To obtain these blessings we need the help of the Lord, but unfortunately God has officially been removed from the availability list. The major goal in life today seems to be increased enjoyment rather than developing moral and spiritual enlightenment and enrichment.

I think we are living in a culture of darkness that is growing darker every day. There are more than two hundred references to darkness in the Bible, not just physical darkness but also a satanic darkness that controls both the minds and hearts of unbelievers and attacks the lives and ministries of believers.

The thickest darkness I have ever experienced was deep at Caiaphus House in Jerusalem..... Tell the story...Our guide warned us that the lights would be turned off briefly and that we must not move from our places. I wondered what it must have been like for the Light of the World to be in such a dark place.....When the light came on, I could feel warmth, peace, security and comfort of the light when it came on. Darkness is ominous, scary and uncertain.

It gave me some idea of what the Egyptians experienced in Exodus 10 when God punished them with three days of thick darkness. Man kept in darkness too long with literally make them psychotic. Man was not created to be in the absence of light...and that is what this kind of darkness is.... only the absence of light. But there is a deeper darkness that is even worse.

God teaches us about Spiritual Darkness....the worst darkness anyone could ever experience. In fact, this darkness is deadly. The spiritual darkness described in the Bible is a powerful force of its own, signifying the presence and work of the devil. Paul reminded us of the true battle.

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV) 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Jesus headed to the cross said the same...as He was arrested in Gethsemane...

Luke 22:53 (ESV) 53 When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

That is a sobering sentence...the power of spiritual darkness. Man is helpless against it. We have no ability to overcome the darkness of our souls by ourselves. That is why we need to be saved.

What are the essentials for God's people that they might be able to overcome the hosts of darkness in today's "enlightened" world?

We Must Surrender Ourselves Completely to the Lord

The word "body" is used seven times in the Sermon on the Mount, because what we do with our body will either glorify the Lord or disgrace the name of Jesus. I want to focus on Matthew 6:22–23.

Matthew 6:22–23 (ESV) 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

The believer's body is God's temple, indwelt by the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (ESV) 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Jesus purchased our body by the shedding of His blood on the cross, and He wants us so to live that we will always glorify God.

Jesus warned His hearers not to cultivate the kind of righteousness practiced by the scribes and Pharisees

Matthew 5:19–20 (ESV) 19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

They had a form of righteousness that did not come from the heart nor did it glorify God. Outwardly, they seemed very religious, but inwardly they lacked the life and love of God

In Matthew 23, Jesus called them "hypocrites" (play actors) and denounced their religious practices. Since the believer's body is God's temple, we must avoid hypocrisy and live godly lives that glorify Him.

Romans 12:1–2 (ESV) 1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

These are familiar verses that instruct us to give the Lord our body, mind, and will and serve Him as “living sacrifices” that are acceptable to God. Jesus told us that we cannot serve two masters

Matthew 6:24 (ESV) 24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Or God and the treasures of this world.

God’s commandments are not burdens to bear but blessings to share and opportunities to glorify God as we minister to others.

The believer’s body is not only God’s temple, it is also His tool. He wants to use the members of our body as instruments in God's hands.

Romans 6:12–13 (ESV) 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

We were born with certain skills and when we were born again, we were given spiritual gifts to match those skills . I was born with an inquisitive mind and a love for books and reading. When I was saved, I received a gift of teaching, and that has been my ministry all these years.

All believers must discover what gift or gifts they possess and use them for the building of the church. What makes us successful servants of God is not our talents or even our training, as important as they are, but our submission and obedience to the Lord and our dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit

The believer’s body is God’s temple and tool, but it is also His treasury

2 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV) 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

Our bodies were formed of the dust of the ground and will return to it, and yet the Holy Spirit of God is willing to dwell within us and enable us to share the word with others. Long after our bodies have returned to dust, God will still be receiving the glory for what the Holy Spirit did through us.

It is immaterial that we are earthen vessels, for the main thing is that we hide God’s word in our heart, cooperate with the Spirit, and keep our vessel clean. To defile the body is to sin against the Lord, grieve the Spirit, and lose the power of God.

When we surrender our bodies....to Christ...we embrace the light that overcomes our darkness.

One thing about light....light always improves our vision. I realize this so much more as I get older. I see so much better when there is light.

That is why once we become believers and the light of God penetrates the darkness....we see the world differently. It is literally as if we have been given spiritual headlamps.

So once we completely surrender our bodies...we can then focus on our eyes.

We Must Have a "Good Eye"

Matthew 6:22–23 (ESV) 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

The paradox here is that the lost world thinks it is enlightened and that Christians are in the dark when it is the world that is in the dark and the Christians who have the light

When I trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, my darkness was replaced by light and much of the so-called light in the world proved to be darkness. In fact, it took the Spiritual light of God to get me to realize all of the darkness around me. With my eyes focused on Christ, everything changed. It was like someone lit up the room and you could finally see God's perspective and truth.

You see things differently and the light of God begins to build comfort, clarity and hope...and those things break through the darkness.

Outlook always determines outcome

Outlook determines outcome. We are all going to focus on something. We can focus our sight on Christ or we can allow our focus to wander toward the darkness. Your outlook determines the outcome. What you are focused on is where you will go. The Bible is full of people who took their focus off of God and paid a heavy cost for it. Look at some examples of how when people focused their eyes on the forbidden they changed the outcome. Think about Adam and Eve....

Genesis 3:6 (ESV) 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Lot looked at the plains of Jordan, chose them for his home, and ended up losing everything

King David looked lustfully upon his neighbor's wife and paid dearly for the sins that followed

The eyes see, the mind imagines, the heart desires, and the will acts.

James pictures temptation and sin as a kind of pregnancy . We are lured by what our eyes see. We become enticed with what we focus on. Initially it seem harmless...just a glance toward darkness...but then it draws us in. Our focus draws us to what has captured our attention. James tells us that sin is birthed and grows in us when we loose focus.

James 1:14–15 (ESV) 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

To give birth to sin day after day is a sad way to live.

The world looks at believers and concludes that they are “in the dark” or “living in the dark ages”; but actually it is the unbelievers who are “in the dark.” Spiritually minded believers see things as they really are. God’s people who have healthy spiritual vision do not attempt to look two ways at the same time, serving two masters

There is a medical condition called diplopia...better known as double vision. You literally see overlapping images. One is real and one is fake. Because there are two of everything...you can't trust anything that you see. This condition is never normal. You may get blurred vision...but double vision...something is wrong and it is often serious.

People don't tolerate double vision very long and neither do we tolerate spiritual double vision either. The vision we must focus on comes from the heart. The light of God comes from our heart not our eyes. That is why we often sing open the eyes of my heart. I don't trust what my eyes see. I am going to focus on the eyes of my heart. I have to choose to see with my heart or my head...but I have to choose one.

Ephesians 1:17–18 (ESV) 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

If you are walking with the Lord, you can depend on “the eyes of your heart” to show you the truth. When it comes to spiritual things, unconverted people see darkness, but God’s children see the light of the Lord and His truth. They are looking at the world as they have always looked....we are learning to look from our hearts. Outlook determines outcome.

The theme of light and darkness and spiritual discernment permeates the Gospel of John.

John 1:4–5 (ESV) 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There were times when even our Lord’s followers were in the dark

John 2:18–21 (ESV) 18 So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” 19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” 20 The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” 21 But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

Jesus spoke of His death and resurrection, but the people thought He was speaking about destroying and rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.

Nicodemus could not understand spiritual birth, and the Samaritan woman in chapter 4 confused the “water of life” and the material water from Jacob’s well. when Jesus spoke to His disciples about the will of God, they thought He meant literal food

John 4:31–34 (ESV) 31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” 32 But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” 33 So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” 34 Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Our Lord’s message about His people eating His flesh and drinking His blood was taken literally by the Jewish crowd. Jesus compared death to sleep, but the apostles did not understand the image , and Martha was confused about the resurrection .

People, even the disciples often did not really understand what Jesus taught. They did not have the Holy Spirit that we have. They were often confused. However, I say this all the time...when you are reading the red letters...always remember that Jesus is almost always talking about spiritual things and the world thinks He is talking about physical things.

Jesus is the light of the world , but there is one problem.

John 3:19 (ESV) 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

John the Baptist pointed out Jesus to the crowd

John 1:29 (ESV) 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

John spoke God's light into the darkness...the purpose for which John had come.

John 1:6–8 (ESV) 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The only person you must tell that the light is shining is a blind person! Everyone else can see it. We must tell the gospel to others because they are spiritually blind.

John’s congregation was spiritually blind, especially the religious leaders. But we as followers of Jesus Christ must keep our spiritual eyesight healthy. We must know the Scriptures ; otherwise, the eyes of our heart will weaken.

Isaiah 5:20–21 (ESV) 20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!

When it comes to spiritual knowledge, the eyes of unbelievers are blind; but believers have spiritual vision that must be carefully maintained

Psalms 36:9 (ESV) 9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

We have the light of God in us....God is light...

1 John 1:5 (ESV) 5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

And because they are one in the same, Jesus is light.

John 8:12 (ESV) 12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The Father is light...The Son is light...and of course the Holy Spirit is light.

Revelation 4:5 (ESV) 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God,

So the Trinity is Light...That light is in us...and one more light was given to us...The Word of God.

Psalms 119:105 (ESV) 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

But the Holy Spirit will also use the light of Scriptures to teach us about the people and circumstances we encounter—and about ourselves. As I study the past, my heavenly Father wants me to see truths as well as facts, character as well as conduct, and convictions as well as opinions.

Jesus warned against double vision. He knew the tendency of people to want more of what the world has to offer while at the same time trying to keep their eyes on Jesus. The light of the Holy Spirit that dwells in our soul only focuses on Jesus.

We have been given the light of the trinity and the light of the Word to see everything differently...God did not give us spiritual insight in order to add it to our view and our opinions...No longer are we blind to God and seeing the world's view...Instead with God's light in us we become blind to the world's view and embrace God's truth. No double vision. The light in us completely shining on Jesus. We walk in the light as He is in the light.

We Must Have a Heart That Seeks God

Many of the advertisements in magazines and newspapers and on television and radio emphasize buying things and building your life on things, and there is nothing essentially wrong with possessing and enjoying things. But Jesus considers things to be "extra dividends" that the Father gives to those who put Him and His kingdom first in their life.

The people who live only for things are robbing themselves of greater blessings: the righteousness of God and the rule of God in their lives. People who live for things do a great deal of worrying, while believers who put God first and live to expand His kingdom have confidence that God will meet all their needs

Our simple prayer “Your kingdom come” refers essentially to the return of Christ, but it also reminds us that He wants to share His kingdom today in homes, schools, offices, hospitals, and the halls of government.

Wherever a dedicated believer is, the kingdom of God is there. When we put Christ first and obey Him, this enables the Holy Spirit to work in and through us as we walk in the Spirit

When Paul was in the prison in Philippi, God’s kingdom was there and God cared for him , and likewise when he was on a ship in a terrible storm. When Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he wrote to Timothy,

2 Timothy 4:15–17 (ESV) 16 At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. ... 17 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me,

The emperor was against Paul but the King of kings was for him!

The future of God’s people means eternal light in heaven (Rev. 22:5),

Revelation 22:5 (ESV) 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

But for unbelievers, those who follow the ways of this world...the earthly kingdom, the future means eternal “outer darkness”

Matthew 8:12 (ESV) 12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Unbelievers think God’s people are in the dark and need to get smart, but it is the unbelievers who need to see the light and trust Jesus, the light of the world Jesus Himself said...

John 12:46 (ESV) 46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

Closing

Many people believe that Christians are living life in the Dark Ages. They tell us that we must be enlightened. They invite us into their darkness. And at times, it can be enticing. People who have not been filled with the light of God have no choice but to live in darkness....and to try to convince themselves that they are enlightened.

Fortunately we don't have to stay in the darkness...we can truly live guided by, focused on, and surrendered to the truth that God's light revealed. What the world calls light is darkness...that is our paradox. God invites us into the light. To live a life wholly surrendered, eyes focused on what is spiritual and a heart that chases God above all else...

John 12:46 (ESV) 46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

Embrace Jesus...He has left the light on for you...to come home. Let's Pray.