

From darkness to light

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- [0 : 0 0] The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of deep darkness and light.
- ! People walking in darkness have seen a great light.! On those living in a land of deepest darkness a light has dawned.
- The contrast here. This isn't a chalk and cheese difference. This is not a black and white contrast. This is a dark and light contrast.
- There's no stronger contrast than between dark and light.
- It was over the surface of the deep. It was utterly... If you were there, you could not have seen anything.
- [1 : 3 6] But, the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, let there be light. And there was light.
- God saw the light was good and he separated light from the darkness. Well, from the very beginning, we see God. We see light.
- And this contrast is throughout the whole Bible. And I want us to grasp light and darkness this morning. I really do. This is really important.
- And I want us to say, have you ever been, had the privilege of going deep into a cave? And it's all light. It's kind of a bit fun and it's a bit interesting and a bit spooky.
- And then that moment comes where they say, we're going to turn off all the lights. And this is, when I did this, this is for mobile phones before there was any residual light and that kind of thing.
- [2 : 4 2] Now, on a sunny day, if I wave my hand in front of my face, I can kind of see my hand moving.
- The lights were plunged out in that cave. I could literally not see my own hand in front of my face. It was utterly, utterly, utterly dark.
- You couldn't see the person next to you. You didn't know where the walls were. If someone spun you around, you'd never find your way out. This is the contrast that the Bible talks about between dark and light.
- And we understand this, don't we? It's something we use all the time in common usage. The darkest hour is just before the dawn. Other things are tough, but there's light at the end of the tunnel.
- And this is a really chilling one. There's something of the night about that one. We know what it means. Sinister. There's an ugliness. There's something not quite right frightening about somebody.
- [3 : 4 9] Have you ever said, I'm completely in the dark about what's going on. And I was hoping you could shed some light in this situation. You know you haven't got a clue what's going on.
- You're in the dark. You don't know. That people say, oh, him, he's gone to the dark side. We know exactly what it means.

It means that they're no longer the way they should be. They've gone to a... Sometimes it can be as simple as they follow the wrong football team. But we get the idea that it's going somewhere out of the light into darkness.

People say, you know, I was in the deepest, darkest despair. And then they hear something or they meet someone or something happens and says, and it was like someone had switched the light on.

There's that contrast between deep despair and hope, light. We even talk about having a light bulb moment. And then, of course, people in Ireland will know about every year we have a darkness into light walk organized by Pieter House.

[5 : 07] And that's an actual sunrise walk that is used to commemorate and support and to raise funds for suicide prevention and mental health.

And, of course, isn't it a beautiful imagery? Walking from darkness into the light. And people start off in the dark, dark, dark. And during this walk, the sun rises.

And it's a beautiful image. And what I want to do today is to go through the Bible looking at this dark to light imagery. Why is it so powerful?

If I just give some words to you, and we can see there's a dark column and there's a light column. Just so we get this big contrast the Bible wants us to get. So if I, in the dark column, despair, light column would be?

Hope, thank you. Lies, falsehood. Blind. War and conflict.

[6 : 14] Unforgiven. Corrupt and contaminated. Pure, yes. Evil. Death. Death. Hell.

Satan. Yeah. So it's that kind of contrast the Bible talks about. The Bible doesn't talk about somewhere in between these two things.

The Bible is contrasts light and darkness. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. Who is this light?

We need to get this right. Who is this light they're talking about? In John 1, which Tom read for us, the light of all mankind, a light shining in the darkness.

[7 : 24] It talks about John coming as a witness about the light. And it makes it very clear he was not the light, John was not the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

I wonder who that was. Well, they were left in no doubt because Jesus states very clearly later on in this Gospel, I am the light of the world.

And Jesus being the exact reputant, the exact, he came as a human, fully human, fully God. And so he was light and in him there was no darkness at all.

He was perfect. He was beautiful. There was no darkness in him at all. And why do you think he's called the light of the world?

Because he is everything good. He is everything perfect. Everything right. Everything proper. Everything holy. Everything good that we aspire to.

[8 : 36] Hope, joy, peace, salvation. That's why he's the light of the world. He reveals the truth.

He leads and guides us to spiritual darkness and guides and directs us through our journey through life. He is glorious. He overcomes darkness.

It says the light shines in the darkness and the darkness is not overcome it. Now, I don't know how you're feeling this morning.

Are you feeling full of life and joy and happiness? Are you feeling full of hope? Or is there sometimes a darkness in you?

Is there sometimes sadness? I think it's interesting at Christmas time and the darkest time of the year, what do we do?

[9 : 44] We decorate, they're not on, but we decorate with lights. It seems to be we are desperate in darkness to see light.

If you have been in that pit of despair, if you are in that pit of despair, what you want to see is light. You want to see light at the end of the tunnel.

You want to see hope and joy. So it talks about a light that came into the world.

A light that entered the darkness of this world. Well, maybe we don't need a lot of persuasion that the world is dark. So when Jesus came into this world, he came into a world with its sadness, its disappointments.

A world where people let you down and hurt you. A world full of death, wars, fear, loneliness, addictions, abuse, greed, family conflicts, injustice, poverty, hatred.

[11 : 09] And we do look around and we see these things and the world feels a dark, dark place. And we long, we long for the light.

Darkness is used in the Bible to describe everything that's wrong with the world. So why did the light come into the darkness?

Well, we sure needed light, didn't we? But why? Well, a profound yet easy answer.

The light came into the world because he loves us.

Because he is full of light. Because he is kind and compassionate. He's loving. He's gracious. He's merciful.

[12 : 14] He didn't want to leave us into the complete and utter mess. The complete and utter darkness we had got ourselves into.

He came because he wanted to bring joy, peace and hope and so much more. This light came into the darkness because he wanted to identify with us.

He was fully God and fully man. And yet he chose to leave the light of heaven, the perfections of heaven where everything was perfect, everything was right.

There was light, there was peace, there was joy, there was love. And these things were perfect. Absolutely perfect.

And he chose, he willingly came in obedience to his Father into the darkness of this world to identify with us.

[13 : 16] And we love that, don't we? You've probably heard, if you're from Cork, you will have heard of Nana Nagel. She was a very wealthy woman.

And she was uncomfortable with her wealth when she saw the poverty around her. She didn't just give her wealth away or somebody away and live in, continue to live in luxury.

No, she got down, as it were, on her hands and knees. And she came amongst the poor and the impoverished of our city and helped to love them and care for them.

And so we love when people do that. And we can think maybe of other people who have done that. But no one has left the glory, the light, the beauty, and come in amongst the filth and degradation of our lives.

And that's such a comfort, isn't it? In Hebrews we read, for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize and understand our weakness and our temptation, but one who knows exactly how it feels to be human.

[14 : 35] He was tempted in every way as we are, yet was without sin. It's like we are being told in this verse, in our struggles, in our difficulties, in the darkness, in the darkness of our despair.

It's as if, it's as if, it's as if, it's as if he is saying to us, I understand what you're going through. I was down there with you.

I know what it's like. He comes, he came down to be alongside us. He says, I will never leave you.

This Christmas time, I know a lot of you aren't looking forward to Christmas. You've experienced sadness, grief, loss.

But see the light. See him who came down into the darkness.

[15 : 45] Who understands your deep, dark pain and is there with you.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil because you are with me.

See that contrast, the darkest valley that you can go through. He is with you. The great God of light, of love and mercy who understands.

But there is even more. There is so much more. There is so much more than him being that light of hope and of comfort in the darkest of our darkest struggles.

There is so much more he offers. As we journey from darkness to light. Can you turn to Luke chapter 2?

[16 : 52] It's on page 1028. 1028. Sorry, 1027.

1027. I want you to picture the scene. We have a lot of light pollution. So it's hard to picture this. But 2,000 odd years ago, once you went out of a village or town. And even they wouldn't have been that bright.

Out in the fields. At night. It was dark. Very dark. Very dark. And the dark is scary.

We don't like being out in the dark. It's scary. We don't even know what's out there. We even know what it's like. We don't like being out in the dark. It's scary. The first thing we do when it's dark is go running for the candles. Well, we don't even need to do that anymore.

We use our phones. But we don't like the dark. We want the light. And at the time line, we have to go out in the dark. It's scary. It's scary. The first thing we do when it's dark is go running for the candles.

[17 : 54] Well, we don't even need to do that anymore. We use our phones. But we don't like the dark. We want the light. And at the time I'm talking about, there was a lot more to be afraid of.

There was bandits. There was wild animals. Who knew, but just outside the little circle of light you had, there wasn't someone waiting or something waiting to kill you.

That was where the shepherds were. And I think it's significant that this happened at night time. Verse 7.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in the manger because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their thoughts by night.

So dark. An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And they were terrified.

[19 : 09] You can understand it. Terrified. At this light, this brightness, as it has already been sent, the presence of the Lord showing up in the utter darkness.

That contrast. But the angel said, do not be afraid. Terrified. Kind of a dark place. Do not be afraid.

Bringing us to a light place. Let's contrast again. Do not be afraid. Why? Because I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

Today, in the town of David, a, a Saviour has been born to you. He is the Messiah, Christ the Lord.

So, what is this message of great joy? It's a Saviour. And why is this such good news? Well, it's good news because of the darkness, isn't it?

[20 : 21] Why is the world such a dark place at times? It's because of the actions of people who have darkness in them.

And whether we want to face the fact or not, the world is a dark place often because of the darkness in me.

And the darkness in you. So, just as the light of creation showed up, just as the angels appeared in the darkness, just as it is here, the light came into our world.

The light doesn't expose what is dark. Well, how? Let me give you an example.

Olive and I were talking about this. And she said, you know, you can be in your house and you think, oh, it's quite clean. And then the sun comes out from behind the clouds.

[21 : 32] And I see all the women laughing. So, a bit nervously. Sorry, that was probably a sexist thing. But yeah, what do you see when the light comes? You see all the dust and all the dirt and all the smears on the window.

Light exposed it. Olive said, not in our house. No, in our house, believe me. Not because of Olive. I cleaned the windows the other day and she said, well, they look clean.

And then the sun came out. And it really does expose it. Or another example.

There's a story told of a man living out in the countryside and he's coming in to the town. And on his way, he falls over.

And he looks down and it's dark. And he's going, I'm all right. And he gives himself a bit of a brush down and thinks, yeah, I'm all right.

[22 : 33] And he starts to come a bit closer and there's some light. And he looks down and, oh my goodness. He sees he's not as clean as he thought.

And then he comes into the city where it's really bright and he discovers he's filthy. The light exposes what's not right, what's wrong.

And we don't like it, do we? When the dark things in our life are exposed.

We want to keep them hidden. Did you ever lift up a stone? And underneath it, all the creepy crawlies. What they do when they're exposed to the light.

They run. They don't like the light. We are so light bulbs. We don't want our darkness exposed.

[23 : 43] We're uncomfortable with it. If anybody says something about us or points out a sin. Some darkness in it. Some bad thing. What do we do?

Despite the fact that we've never been to law college. We've become expert lawyers and barristers. Defending our position. Trying to justify ourselves.

Or make the lightest of it that we can. We become defensive. Defending our position. When God starts to shine.

His radiant, beautiful, perfect light on our lives. And exposes that darkness. What do we do?

The light has come into the world. But people loved darkness instead of the light. Because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light.

[24 : 50] And will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. That is uncomfortable, isn't it? I wonder if that's not me.

That is me. I remember when I was a kid in Sunday school. The teachers would say things like. Well, we don't do sin, do we? Because sin is horrible. And I'd go.

Yes. But. If I lie. I can get out of trouble. If I'm greedy. I can keep the sweets for myself.

If everybody and all of my friends are teasing someone. And I join in with them. And I'll be in the in gang. It's dark and horrible, isn't it?

We don't want these things exposed in our lives. We don't want these things exposed. But there is hope.

[25 : 53] Because God is so loving and so patient. And he comes with that irresistible pull. That irresistible light of hope.

I have come into the world as the light. So that no one who believes in me. Should stay in darkness. And there's something hopeful about this.

Who knows what a Goldman acclimation tonometry is? Nobody? No. If I told you it relies on the invert flick principle.

Would that help? If I told you that it had a blue slit lamp. Would that be helpful? No. Okay. This is a very helpful illustration.

I know what it is. Because I looked it up. Because I've experienced it. And I think this is a very helpful one for what we're studying. I went for an eye test.

[26 : 52] And I went for an eye test eventually. A year or so ago. Because my good wife kept on nagging. Not nagging. She said it's not nagging. She said it's helpful guidance.

And so eventually. Excuse me. Excuse me. I went. And they took a bit longer than I thought. And she said.

There's something we're not quite happy about. I want to send you to a specialist. So they sent me to a specialist. And they did all kinds of things.

Including. Well I'm not going to try and say it again. Because it took me enough trouble to say it in the first place. But they used this blue lamp. To shine into my eyes. And they discovered.

That I had glaucoma. What's glaucoma? It's a pressure issue in the eye. That actually causes you. Eventually.

[27 : 53] To go blind. Oh now I sat off. That took notice. To go blind. Darkness. That's awful. But there was a solution.

I was given these eye drops. She said. Keep taking those eye drops. And it really should deal with the problem. Now I would have been an utter fool. To say. No. I prefer.

To go on as I am. I prefer. To go blind. I prefer the darkness. That's crazy isn't it? A problem had been exposed.

And I wasn't going to do anything about it. Of course I was going to do something about it. This is what Jesus did when he came.

He spent a lot of time doing miracles. And the miracle that really stands out to me in the light of this is. He healed the blind.

[28 : 52] Now it was great. But the miracles were so much more. They showed who he was. He had the power of God. But they demonstrated. They were indicative of something else.

And it was our need to see. When he healed the blind people. He was really saying. I have come as the light. So I can point out your spiritual blindness.

So we love. As Christians. This light. That shines. Points out our darkness. And I've been amazed.

The amount of people. Who give. Their testimony. And they say. They reach this point in their life. Where this light. They didn't go looking for it.

This light. Came shining. Into their life. And they became. Aware. Of their. Dark. Dark. Evil. In their heart.

[29 : 53] Like never before. Dark. But then they heard about forgiveness. And the light.

That comes flooding in. If I keep doing this. I'll manage one day. To be not emotional. But it is such.

An amazing thing. This move from darkness. To light. From despair. To hope. From death. To life. From hell.

To heaven. That is what the light is about. That's. At Christmas. That's what we remember. Jesus coming. Into our darkness.

The ways of sin. Death. Talks about hell being that outer. Outer darkness. The gift of. God.

[30 : 56] Is eternal. Life. If we confess our sins. He is faithful and just. To forgive us our sins. And cleanse us from. All our unrighteousness.

He gets rid of. All the blackness. All the dark. All the evil. I heard a story. And this goes on. Doesn't it? This work.

This light. Shining into our lives. I heard a story. About a pastor. And somebody. Who had come into the light. Who had got saved.

And on their ongoing journey. Towards sanctification. The Lord kept pointing out. Things in their lives. That weren't right. That they had to change. And he came to the pastor.

And he said. Pastor. I am so bad. You just. You talk about God. Forgiving me. And God's always been.

[31 : 51] Willing to forgive me. But you don't understand. How bad I am. And the pastor said. Oh no. No. You're not so bad.

You're not that bad. You're way worse. Than you think. But. You are more forgiven. And more loved.

Than you will ever understand. Darkness. To light. I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me. Will never walk in darkness. But will have. The light. Of life. So Jesus who came into the world. As our light. Who dealt with our darkness.

He brings us. Into the light. He transforms. Our darkness. Into light. We are utterly changed.

[32 : 50] At conversion. It is that night and day difference. If you are. But you are a chosen people. A royal priesthood. A holy nation.

God's special possession. That you may declare. The praise of him. Who called you out of darkness. Into his. Wonderful. Light. Do you see the contrast? He is saying.

I have bought you. From dark. To light. We should be.

Praising him. Every moment. Of our lives. He has bought us. He has bought us. He has bought us. He has bought us. From death. To light. From darkness.

To light. If you are. A child of God today. I know you have your struggles. I know. He continues to shine. His light on you.

[33 : 45] But because. Of his redemption. Because of. Because. He. God. Sent Jesus. Jesus. Is the perfect life. For us. He was the perfect.

Man. He was our sacrifice. All his. Righteousness. Was credited. To our account. Now there is a huge sermon. And that. There is loads of sermons.

In there. But basically. What it means is. Before God. He sees you. As light. And perfect. Because of Jesus. Yes. We continue to have our struggles. But this is how we are seen.

You. Who are believers. Are all. Children. Of. The light. And children. Of. The day. We do not.

Belong to the night. Or to darkness. This isn't me. This is God's word. So if you are struggling today. As a believer. And feel. You have. Failed him.

[34 : 41] You have. But that's not. How he sees you. He says. You are now. Children. Children. Of the light. You are not. Of the night. You are of the day. Look.

I'm going to read another verse. The Bible. Hammers. This home. Ephesians. 5. 8. 9. You. For you. Were once.

Darkness. It doesn't say. You were once. In darkness. That you were once. Darkness. And all of that means. But now.

You are light. In the Lord. Live as children. Of the light. For the fruit of the light. Consists of all goodness. Righteousness. And truth.

So don't believe. The devil. When he tells you. That God doesn't love you. As a believer. Or that you're failing him.

[35 : 38] Or that. No. He wants you to know. You are. In the light. Because of Jesus. so the light that came into our darkness the darkness that pointed out the beautiful grace of God that shines his light on our lives and as Christians we should say to paraphrase Lord please shine your light into my heart show me those dark places help me to change help me to live as a child of the light because that's what I am so we're encouraged to live what we actually are Peter Greer who used to be in this church it was one of the phrases that will always stick with me he used to say if we're a believer live what you are you are a child of God you're a child of the light live who you are but something more happens on this journey from darkness to light we who were once darkness who are now in the light become lights you are the light of the world it says and it's not talking about Jesus in this context it's talking about me it's talking about you people who are believers he has so transformed us we are no longer darkness we are now light and we can be lights shining in the darkness all of my work when we were young and foolish now we're just old and foolish but we went cycling in in Germany and we decided to take a shortcut and we got really really really lost in the countryside and we were in a valley and we really didn't know where to go and then we saw up on the hill the village we were heading for and the lights were on you couldn't you had to see it all around was dark but there was light and this is what this verse talks about it's found like believers we're like a city on a hill full of light and it says in the same way let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven what are your good deeds it's showing up in the world showing that light that compassion that understanding that love that willingness to forgive that willingness to come alongside the people who are struggling and why does it say that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven well it's partly about that they won't be just praising you because they'll see why you're doing it you'll give a reason for the hope you have but I think the real reason it says that they will glorify your father in heaven is that it's by shining the light by introducing people to the light of the gospel they too can be saved and then they will glorify their father in heaven we hear in common usage oh

I want to be a star I want to shine brightly well if you want to shine brightly the bible actually says it if we are living as Christians we shine like stars in the sky if you think your life is irrelevant no your life is not irrelevant your life has the greatest relevance if you're a believer because you are a light you are hope we're called to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me tell out this good news when you consider what the Lord has done for you remember that you are lights remember that he is with you just be light yes thank you all

I have to finish now one more point a day is coming yes I will get emotional again this beautiful hope a day is coming when the darkness will be gone and I know people here who experience are experiencing awful darkness in their lives but a day is coming when it's all finished no more darkness only light it says in Revelation chapter 22 and verse 5 there will be no more night and that is shorthand to say all of the injustice all the pain all the sickness all the suffering all the death all the grieving all the brokenness it's going to be gone finished they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun for the Lord

God will be their light and they will reign forever and ever this Christmas celebrate the light the light be light and know that the darkness is going to end Amen up up■■■■■■■■