

Defeated Darkness at the Cross (Communion)

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[0 : 0 0] the death of Jesus. I want particularly to focus on that section that begins at verse 44 where we read it was now about the sixth hour and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour where the sun's light failed. And of all the words, of all the concepts that we find in the Bible, all the expressions that we find that concern the horror of sin, the horror of separation from God, the word darkness surely has to be the strongest, the most powerful word that we find here in Scripture to tell us of that separation that sin causes between man and God. Whether you go to Genesis or you go through Scripture right through to Revelation, we see, if you like, what we might call the drama, the drama of a holy God pitched against evil. We see righteousness against unrighteousness. We see spiritual warfare, that warfare between good and evil. And through that warfare we see the constant metaphor being used of evil against God, the metaphor of darkness.

darkness, darkness, rebellion against the one true God. And whereas light is used of the image of or speaking of the holiness of God, the purity of God, darkness seen in contrast to that light, that pure light of God's grace, God's love, God's mercy, who God is, the God of light.

And those of you who were here last night at our pre-communion service remember when we were considering Matthew's account of Jesus' betrayal. Remember Matthew introduced that betrayal with the words, when evening came. In other words, he's bringing forth the physical aspect of darkness there that evening to point forward to the spiritual darkness that was happening when Judas Iscariot betrayed the Son of God. When the Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed in that act of darkness, that act of evil. When the Son of God eating that Passover meal and yet the betrayer, the traitor of Judas Iscariot going to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. And yet, and yet in that betrayal, in that betrayal, God overruled in that betrayal.

And God overruled to bring the light of the world to the prominence, to be seen as the one who'd come to give his life for sinners.

And even in the darkness of that room there in Jerusalem, just moments before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, Jesus announcing that he had come to give his life for others. The light of Christ shining there even in the darkness.

[3 : 2 2] And that light that would shine and continue to shine for sinners to rescue sinners. Even as we'll see in a moment, even in the darkness of Christ's suffering, through that darkness, light shining in Jesus when he upon himself gave himself for sinners and upon himself took your sins and my sins so that you might be brought into the glorious light of the Lord Jesus.

And so it's this theme of darkness and light that we're going to continue to look at, to help us in our, again we might say in the service, this time of preparation before the Lord's people come to the Lord's table.

Because we're here this morning to remember the Lord's death. And as we remember the Lord's death and prepare to do so, we do have to again be reminded of the darkness that Luke speaks of here when Jesus hangs on the cross.

The darkness that speaks of God's punishing sin. The darkness that speaks of God's judgment against sin and the judgment cast upon the Lord Jesus Christ when he became sin for us.

And so when we read here of the crucifixion of Jesus and we might see these awful moments of his sin bearing on the cross. When we read there of Jesus being made a curse.

[4 : 54] The curse of God when Jesus bore the sin of many. Jesus bearing God's righteous wrath against sin. What do we see?

We notice that the gospel writers speak of that moment in terms of darkness. That's what we read there in Luke 23. It was now about the sixth hour and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour while the sun's light failed.

In other words, we're being brought to see the judgment of God being inflicted on Jesus. Jesus bearing your sins on himself.

Jesus entering the darkness of God's judgment. Jesus was made sin for his people. It's that darkness on the cross that really we're going to, as I say, we're going to look at this morning.

And I suppose we might say this, that yes, there are times, and quite rightly so, when we look at the cross and we see Jesus the victor. Jesus victorious over sin and victorious over Satan.

[6 : 02] And we triumph on the cross and quite rightly do so. And we rejoice in the victory that Jesus has won for us on the cross. But don't we often forget the horror that Jesus faced when he bore the sin of many?

Don't we so often forget the darkness that Jesus himself faced and was under? Even in that cry of dereliction, when he cried, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Don't we often forget the cost? The cost of our salvation when Jesus paid that cost by his suffering on the cross. All too often we simply think of the suffering of Jesus as physical suffering.

And yes, he did suffer physically, but intensely more. The spiritual suffering, the suffering of his soul when Jesus was made sin for us. He who knew no sin made sin for us.

We are sinners. And we made sin, as we said, we made sin becoming the curse of God. The darkness of being forsaken by the Father.

[7 : 12] When the Son had known that eternal love of God the Father and the glory of eternity. And then in the darkness, when Jesus bears the sin of many, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And of course it's a darkness that we can really find difficult to put into words. But we have Scripture's word to inform us of the experience of Jesus on the cross.

And so we will consider this morning the darkness that Jesus faced in that moment of the Father's dereliction of Jesus.

So that you might be rescued from the darkness of sin and brought into the glorious light of God's love and brought into that light eternally. And so we will see, as God has given us to see, what Christ suffered on the cross.

We go where God asks us to go and we don't try and be diverted from even our own human sense of thinking. We go as Scripture directs us. We go to the cross and we see there on the cross, Lord Jesus in his suffering.

[8 : 24] Jesus, whom it was prophesied by Isaiah, who was stricken by God, smitten by God, afflicted, pierced, pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities.

Even these words that express the horror, the darkness of Jesus' suffering. Jesus facing the wrath of God against sin so that you might not face that wrath for your sins.

So, we're going to look at this account that Luke gives us here. And as we focus more on the passage, look at three aspects of the darkness that Luke gives us.

Limited darkness, universal darkness, undefeated darkness. Limited darkness. Well, we're told very clearly from verse 44 and the start of the passage there that for three hours, we're told, a limited time, three hours, darkness covered the whole land.

We're told that the sun stopped shining. We're not going to try and explain that away with all the various different interpretations that secular interpreters put on this.

[9 : 42] No, this is an activity, we might say a supernatural activity of God. For three hours from midday till 3pm, the sun was prevented from shining on the land.

Of course, 12 noon to 3pm, it's the height of the sun, the sun is brightest, it's strongest. But God showing by that cessation of the sun shining that something is happening of crucial importance as Jesus suffers on the cross.

Because there's much more than a physical darkness that comes upon the land. That's what we noticed last night. The physical darkness pointing to that spiritual darkness.

And of course, that physical darkness that happens there between 12 noon and 3pm, of course, it's contrary to God's law of creation or laws of creation.

So, God obviously suspending these laws and doing so for a greater purpose. Bringing about this particular darkness to show that something indescribable, we might say, is happening on the cross as Jesus suffers for us.

[10 : 54] And surely that purpose, the darkness, the physical darkness pointing to what's happening on the cross, indicating judgment. God's judgment on sin.

There's evil being dealt with by God's justice. And as God's justice demanded. And so the darkness of evil there is present even in Calvary as sin has been judged by a holy God.

And you know, even as we were considering the darkness even that stopped Jesus, even the night before his crucifixion. And then when we think of the darkness of evil that Christ bore on the cross, you can see why.

Why darkness is enveloping the land, pointing to the spiritual darkness all around. You know, if you go back to chapter 22 and verse 53, again you see how this darkness is emphasized.

Because what we read there, we read of Jesus before the Jewish leaders, before the chief priests. He's there before the guards. He's there before the elders of the Jewish temple.

[12 : 04] And Jesus has been arrested. He's been put on trial for blasphemy. And so we might see, humanly speaking, Jesus is surrounded. He's surrounded by all who hate him.

And then he says something. He says something that indicates the power of darkness against Jesus. He says these words, This is your hour and the power of darkness.

You say, well, what's Jesus saying here? Well, truly he's saying that at that point, the power of Satan, the power of Satan was there. As Jesus was being despised, as he was being rejected by all who hated him, the power of Satan was there in the midst of those who hated Jesus.

Because, to back that up, we might say you can go elsewhere in Scripture. Go to Acts 26, for example. And again, you see darkness being equated with the power of Satan.

You read in Acts 26 of the Apostle Paul. He's defending himself before King Agrippa. And Paul speaks about the charge, the command that Jesus gave Paul when Paul was converted, the command to spread the good news.

[13 : 19] to sinners, to open their eyes. Listen to these words. So that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. So when we're reading of Jesus being confronted by his enemies, these enemies are the instruments of Satan.

These enemies are being, we might say, controlled or overcome by the power of Satan. Satan's moved the hearts of these leaders to seek to silence Jesus, to try and prevent his mission, the mission of salvation being accomplished.

And you know this, isn't it the case? That it's that same darkness that once had power over you. That same darkness that once had that power over your life before you came into the light of Christ by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

You know, Jesus would often speak about that transformation being brought from darkness to light. He would often speak of that in these very terms.

When he spoke about what he had come to do by his life of perfect obedience and by his death. Again, listen to the word of Jesus. John 8, 12.

[14 : 34] I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. Just that little time later in John 12. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness, may not remain under the power of Satan.

And you who will be coming to the table in a few moments' time, you can testify, and even by your presence, can testify that you have been brought from darkness to light, that you've been taken from the power of Satan and brought under the power of Almighty God.

You'll testify that your eyes were opened to see the light of Christ's love. And you'll testify that it wasn't you who opened your eyes as it were, it was by the power of God that your eyes were able to be opened so that you might see the light of Christ and have the light of life so that you might believe that power, the power of Satan replaced by the power of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And under that power, under the power of God, then you live. You live by that light. You live by the light of Christ. The light of the world.

And even when you're coming to the table and being at the table, you're proclaiming the change that's happened in your life. You're proclaiming that you now live by the light of Christ's love.

[16 : 08] You're there because of what Jesus did for you on the cross. You're there because Jesus bore the sin of many when you became that curse of God.

You'll be there because Jesus faced the darkness of God's judgment so that you might not face that same judgment. And you'll be strengthened and are strengthened to live by the light of Christ's love and grace.

Listen to the words that Paul wrote to the church in emphasis on that very matter. He said, For at one time you were darkness, but now you're light in the Lord.

And then this word of command, Walk as children of light. Walk as children of light. And then he goes on to say, Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness.

You see, the contrast, your light, your shining for Christ, don't get latched into any aspect of darkness that once held you.

[17 : 10] And again, continuing as we read in Ephesians 5, The light you received in Christ must shine forth in you, must be shone forth in your life so that you truly witness to the Lord who's rescued you and can rescue others, bringing them from darkness.

darkness to light. That's what you'll testify by being the place where we take the bread and the wine. That you are even there shining for the Lord Jesus.

That you would testify you have been taken from darkness into light. That did Jesus say, Let your light shine before others so that we see your good works and give glory to your Father who's in heaven.

Remember this. Just as darkness once gripped your life. At one time, you lived under the power of sin, the power of darkness, that power that controlled your thoughts, your words, your actions.

Well, remember, that power is only for a limited time. That power was only there until the Lord Jesus came into your life and you were rescued from that darkness and brought into the marvelous light of Christ.

[18 : 24] And, you know, as we see the crucifixion again of the Lord Jesus, then be reminded of the darkness that Jesus suffered. As Jesus entered into that darkness of His crucifixion, that wasn't an eternal darkness.

darkness. The forces of evil had their hour, as it were. Jesus was arrested when He was put on trial, when He was crucified. But it was only, the power of darkness there was only for a short time.

Because, of course, Christ triumphed over sin, over Satan, three days later, over death itself. And we then have to say that Christ's suffering was for a limited time.

That darkness of judgment was for a limited time. That three-hour period of darkness telling us that it was limited. It was God's appointed time for Christ's suffering.

He endured that suffering. But let's never minimize that suffering. Never minimize the darkness of Christ's suffering. It was an intensity of suffering that, well, we have to say it certainly shrugged in the mystery of God's judgment.

[19 : 36] And yet, we have to say with a scripture affirms the pains of hell took hold in Jesus when Jesus was made sin for us. Jesus entered the darkness of God's judgment.

Jesus suffered as the sinless one who became sin. But it wasn't an eternal suffering of judgment. Remember, the quotas from Isaiah will do so again.

The prophecy of Isaiah chapter 53, out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied the limited suffering of Jesus. You who have been saved by the blood of the Lord Jesus, the blood of the Lamb, rejoice that you will not suffer an eternity of darkness.

Why? because Jesus in that moment of space and time when Jesus took your punishment. You have that hope of eternal life, of eternity, the glory of eternity.

You have that promise of basking in the light of the presence of God because Jesus entered the darkness on your behalf. but if you've not given your life to the Lord Jesus then don't think that you have any kind of limited darkness as it were because God's word tells us of the eternity of darkness for all who have not and who did not give their lives to the Lord Jesus.

[21 : 10] God's word tells us of the eternity of hell as Jude tells us of the gloom of utter darkness was there for those who were not of Christ forever.

But you who do go to the table give thanks give thanks for your safety give thanks that you've been set free by the death of the Lord Jesus that you're no longer condemned you're no longer under that power that power of darkness.

I come back to you who haven't yet given your life to the Lord Jesus who haven't surrendered your life because the words of scripture which are true tell of that darkness that is unimaginable horror.

I plead with any of you who have not yet given your life to Jesus turn from that darkness come into the light of Christ and know that that salvation that's offered to you is true and real and full and eternal because there is limitless grace limitless light in the glory of God but hell is a place of limitless darkness.

One more thing to say about the limited darkness that we see here in the passage and remember this that Satan's power itself is limited. Jesus triumphed over sin on the cross and in that triumph he triumphed over Satan.

[22 : 48] Jesus defeated the power of Satan he defeated the power of darkness. Satan did not have the victory. Satan's power is limited.

He doesn't have the victory Jesus has the victory and yes even in the times that we're living in we see chaos and confusion and desperation we see so often the power of darkness seeming to take hold and to be established but be assured be assured that our God reigns that God reigns and that the church has that victory in the Lord Jesus and yes at times the gates of hell seem to prevail no the gates of hell will not prevail because God is sovereign because God's power is limitless Satan's power is limited limited darkness but then secondly universal darkness again this picture of horror that Luke presents us here when he tells us that darkness came over the whole land again this is more than just a geographical expression surely we're being led to see the universal darkness of sin and God's cruel judgment against sin in Adam in our first parent Adam all sinned every one of us shares in Adam's and the guilt of Adam's sin there's no one who's sinless only the Lord

Jesus lived that life of perfect obedience we're all guilty before a holy God we've all walked in darkness darkness is universal it's across the whole world every nation every tribe every people every language have sinned and deserve God's wrath and so Jesus had to come to die for people from all nations all tribes all languages all peoples and Jesus has given his life for those from people from all peoples and tribes and languages and nations see the scope of what Jesus achieved on the cross he died for all I don't mean every single person is going to be saved not at all but he died for all for all for whom the Father gave him apostle John spoke about when he wrote in 1st John 2 verse 2 he's the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not for ours only but the sins of the whole world in other words

Jesus died not just for his disciples not just for those immediate circle of believers that followed him but he died for all in every nation who've come to know him as Lord and Saviour and just as darkness covered the whole land so the darkness that Jesus suffered ensures that his death is sufficient for all for whom he came to give his life Jesus was the whole burnt offering that word holocaust that's used in the Old Testament that speaks of the whole burnt offering Jesus was that whole complete burnt offering and that's that whole burnt offering he's fully satisfied God's perfect justice so let's never minimize the price that Jesus paid for your salvation and don't come to the table in any kind of matter of fact casual manner that I'm afraid so often we can be tempted to do don't ever lessen the depth of the darkness of suffering that

Jesus endured for your sake as we said no language can fully express the horror of the darkness that Jesus faced but there's one writer put it like this which is I think helpful he speaks about the black hole which no light could penetrate and that I suppose gives us a glimpse of the suffering that Jesus faced and be made sin for us but remember it was a suffering that was wholly acceptable to God it was the whole burnt offering and therefore wholly acceptable to God and I pray that that gives you assurance and encouragement when you go to the table because you've been reminded that his death was fully sufficient for you Jesus faced the full wrath of God the Father so that you might not face the wrath of God against your sin Jesus bore the sin of many so that many might be saved and you're included in that many if you've given your life to the Lord

[27 : 54] Jesus and that universal darkness that Luke writes about here it tells us that what Christ faced was full and whole and complete there was no partial suffering on Christ's part no because because of the universal nature of sin Jesus faced the full judgment of God against sin somebody wrote hell came to Calvary that day and the saviour bore its horrors in our place Jesus absorbed the full judgment of God and it was just judgment God's justice against sin based fully holy by the Lord Jesus in that universal darkness but then finally and for our great encouragement defeated darkness so we've seen the limited power of darkness in other words Satan will not have and does not have the last word

Jesus had the last word he has the last word Jesus as he entered the darkness of sin bearing Jesus indicated as we read there that victory the victory over sin the victory over Satan verse 46 father into your hands I commit my spirit Satan had tried by all the power that he had to try and divert Jesus from the work of salvation Satan was defeated on the cross Jesus won the victory on the cross Jesus defeated the power of darkness there on the cross God and man now reconciled the curtain the temple curtain being torn from top to bottom the way now is open for man to come to God through the Lord Jesus so as we remember the Lord's death till he comes yes we remember the darkness that that Jesus entered for your sake and remember the glorious truth that that darkness couldn't hold Jesus in its grip

Jesus suffered there for you and for me and for all and so what's your response surely it's for you to die to sin and live in the light of Christ's grace so Paul later writes in Corinthians 5:14 one has died for all therefore all have died Christ died for all for all who have died died with Christ dying to sin living in the light of the Lord Jesus love and mercy and you who will go to the table in a very short time now remember what Jesus has done for you in giving his life even in the darkness of that sin bearing but go fortified by the word of God remember even as you take the bread and the wine that tell by representation what Jesus suffered for you give thanks glorify his name have that deep appreciation in your heart for the

Lord Jesus for the cost that he paid for your salvation he was that sacrificial lamb he gave himself as priest he offered himself up he gave himself a sacrifice for the sake of sinners he drank from the cup of God's wrath and he drank from it fully so that you might know that full salvation in the Lord Jesus and so yes we've been thinking of darkness but remember that you who have given your life to the Lord Jesus you're rescued from the darkness you're within the light of God's love and rejoice that you will not know the darkness of God's wrath because of Jesus who took that darkness upon himself and took it lovingly amen let us pray Lord our God we thank you for your word and we pray Lord that you will lift up our hearts to rejoice in you to give you praise and thanks for

Christ our substitute and we pray Lord that as we're reminded of his substitutionary death that we will truly rejoice and give praise he for us Jesus who died for us for sinners so help us Lord as we come to this next part of the service we thank you Lord that you give us these means to remember our salvation through the death of the Lord Jesus and we thank you Lord for the means that you give us may we not go through the motions as it were without our hearts and minds engaged in what you've given us to do so bless us each one we pray go before us we ask in Jesus name Amen Amen