

# Dealing with the Dark Side

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. This is a good moment. Do you know that?

When the pastor takes off his watch, it's a good moment. Amen. When God's people open their Bibles, that's a good moment.

I want you to turn in the Scriptures this morning to Ephesians chapter 5 and follow in your own copy as I read the text that we are going to study together this morning, dependent upon the Spirit of God.

Ephesians chapter 5, verse 11.

Wise, but wise. Making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

[ 1 : 39 ] Let's pray together. Father, as we have often said, for us, prayer is not a habit or something that is woven into the routine of our service, but it really is an expression of our dependence and our confidence in you.

We pray because you know. We know that you exist. And we know that you hear and answer the prayer of those who come with a contrite and humble heart and ask that you would open our eyes that we might see glorious things in your Word.

It's a great thing to be saved. It's a great thing to have been taken out of darkness and put into light. In fact, to be the light, as the Scripture says. And this morning we ask that the Spirit of God would work in us, that as we hear the preaching of the Word, your Spirit would weigh upon our hearts and our consciences, that when we leave this place, we would leave with resolve that we would spend our days with a passion for Christ and a concern and a burden for those who do not know the Lord Jesus.

And we're going to trust you for what you do in your people, who you have saved and redeemed for your namesake. And we pray this because of Jesus.

[ 3 : 09 ] Amen. Amen. Well, one of the things that I reminded you of last week is that when we take up the book of Ephesians, we recognize a book that deals with the reality of Christian life, first of all, by explaining how it is that we come to faith.

And as I was sitting over here on that pew, kind of reviewing in my mind the broad flow of the book, I couldn't help but think about that passage in Ephesians 1, verse 3, where it says, I love that.

Do I deserve what I have in the Lord Jesus? Oh, no, no, no, no. But I have it because of Him. And this morning, as we come together, we have the first half of Ephesians behind us.

And we have been reminded by the apostle and encouraged by the Spirit of God to understand that salvation is of the Lord, and He who is our Savior took us out of darkness into His light, and He has done that for His glory.

Ephesians chapter 3 closes off with that just absolutely spectacular statement, 321, unto Him be, who knows it, glory in the church.

[ 4 : 35 ] At various points in my life, I've had all kinds of life verses. How many of you like that? Some people lock in on one, and it's good to go. But for me, I've had more than I know what to do with. But that's probably one of the ones.

It's in my office. It's somewhere just central in my thinking is, unto Him be glory, unto Him be glory. Then Paul opens up, and in the remaining part of the book that we are continuing to study, Lord willing, he deals with what believers are to be.

We're saved. We're His creation. We're His children. And he explains in chapter 4, 5, and 6 how we're to live. And he begins there in Ephesians chapter 4.

He says, listen, you're to walk worthy of the calling to which you've been called. Once you become a believer, you don't live your life anymore for yourself. Do you understand that?

You live it for Christ. That's why you were saved, for His glory, for His purposes. Chapter 4 explains a little bit of how the church fits and works together and how it's been designed by God to be a manifestation of His glory to the unbelieving world.

[ 5 : 47 ] But then in chapter 5, we saw there at the very beginning of the chapter, it says, listen, you are to be imitators of God. In other words, act like God. Whew. That's a pretty sobering statement.

And then what Paul does, as a good teacher would do, is having made that very strong pronouncement that believers are to act like God, and we said, you know, he goes on and explains it in practical terms.

And that's what we've been doing as we've been working our way through Ephesians chapter 5. We're recognizing that acting like God means that there are certain kind of behaviors that may have been part of our past that have no part to do with how we are now.

We're to be different. Paul then goes on, and as we saw last week, he says, hey, you were darkness. You were darkness. Now you're light.

And as a result of being light, there are some very particular things that we as believers are to be engaged in, and yet it becomes a little frustrating, a little challenging, because it says we're not to be dark.

[ 6 : 54 ] We're to be light. But as I pointed out last week in the sermon, guess what? If you are a light, guess where you get put? Does anybody remember? You get put in dark places.

Do you realize that? I mean, the only reason you light a candle is what? Because you don't like the dark. And Jesus came into the world to be the light of the world, and he has made us to be light.

And I can tell you this, if you're his child, you are going to find yourself in dark places. And God intends for you to shine in those corners and those places where he's put you.

He intends for you to make a difference. What we're going to be looking at today is a very practical explanation of how to be light in dark corners and not be overwhelmed by the darkness.

So I guess we could say that what we're dealing with this morning is facing and accepting the reality of who we are and dealing with the dark place that we are. So let's look at the passage here and pick up there in verse 11 and recognize the first bit of counsel and instruction that the apostle gives to us is this, don't partner with the dark.

[ 8 : 08 ] Don't partner with the dark. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness. Do you realize that a lot of the Christian life is kind of a balancing act a little bit?

And in fact, there are a number of different theological truths that are challenging because our tendency is to be either or. And sometimes there are both ands.

And when we are told that we are to be lights in a dark place, we recognize that being in dark places has some complications and some challenges in that circumstance.

And the church over the generations and throughout history has kind of struggled a little bit with how can you be light in a dark place? Well, one of the ways that some have done is that they've just kind of been their little light in their little corner, us four no more.

Let me give you a couple illustrations of it. How many of you, when you drive up to Millersburg and places like that, notice that there are houses that don't have electric lines running to them?

[ 9 : 16 ] Do you know what that is? When you have a house that has no electricity, it's probably an Amish person, and they have largely withdrawn from culture.

They don't have much effect on... When was the last time you had an Amish missionary knocking on your door? Okay, it doesn't happen. They've withdrawn for the large part, and I'm not being disrespectful of them as a people, but I want you to understand that they've withdrawn from the culture and community around them.

They really make no bones about the fact that they're detached, and evangelism and impact on other people with the gospel of Christ is not something that they're hardwired for.

Now, the Pharisees were really top off on that. That was where they specialized. They were great at pointing out the sins in other people. Remember the Pharisees, kind of walking around real stiff, and everything was just all right, and I've been reading through the book of John, and I was struck by the fact that here are the Pharisees.

They come to bring accusation against Jesus, but because they didn't want to pollute themselves, they wouldn't even get near Pilate. He had to come out to them. And the Pharisees were all about spotting sin in other people, and they stood away from it.

[ 10 : 33 ] They were isolated from the heartaches and the hardships and the difficulties that sin creates, and I think we recognize here that sin makes messes.

Do you recognize that? Do you understand that? It's no surprise. When you look at what sin does in people's lives, it causes terrible difficulties, and recognizing it is not really all that God has called us to do.

Others have gone to the complete opposite, the extreme, and they've accommodated the world to the point that they join in every fad and every debauchery that is practiced today.

There are many professing Christians whose lifestyles, their moral conduct, their vocabulary at work, the things that they're interested in, the way in which they want to spend their time someday, really is substantially no different at all from the way the unbelieving world is.

I remember several years ago talking with a young man who had kind of come for a period of time and then moved away, and this young man was talking to me about his interest in finding a wife, and so one of the things that he had done is he had visited all the singles ministries in our proximity, in our community.

[ 11 : 49 ] You know what he shared with me? He says the thing that really frustrated him was that in one singles ministry after another, he bumped into gross immorality that was known by people who were in leadership that did absolutely nothing about it.

I talked with another man who was a pastor, large church, very successful, and he was complaining a little bit to me, and I was curious as I listened to his complaint.

He says, you know, one of the problems I have is that we go all out to bring people in. We are accommodating. We're ready to meet people wherever they are, but then as we begin discipling them, we find that having met them exactly where they are and being actually as accommodating as we are, it's very, very difficult to say to them, hey, listen, you need to stop living with your girlfriend or having premarital intercourse is inappropriate.

I am so thankful that I can tell you this morning that the new president of Cedarville University, one of the early things that he did when he came to Cedarville, this is Dr. White, he just took over this fall.

When he came, he found out that they were going to have what they call a critical concerns weekend where they had people come in and speak on a number of different critical concerns.

[ 13 : 16 ] And the previous administration had secured a contract with someone to come from Boston College, ostensibly, to minister to believers with this message.

Here's the message. It is unrealistic for Christians in the 21st century to expect single people to abstain from premarital intercourse.

And the college, the university, had secured a speaker to come in to talk about that theme. Do you follow that?

And her premise was, listen, you have really done due diligence if you encourage good Christian boys and girls to at least wait until they really believe that this is the right one.

What Dr. John White did was said, look, we would be very glad to pay you the speaking engagement fee that we have agreed, but goodbye. We're not going to accept that. We're not going to accept that.

[ 14 : 19 ] And as I look at the passage, it says, take no part with the unfruitful works of darkness. Understand this, believers are not called to be partners or approving of darkness and sin.

That's not hard to recognize in the passage, is it? Being light in a dark place means being an exception. When others are leering at pictures that are immoral and inappropriate, and all you have to do is turn away from that and guess what happens?

How many of you have already figured out what happens? They immediately recognize you didn't have to say anything, you just stepped away and what's your problem? Or there is some crude humor that is going around and everybody else is snickering and you're not joining in laughing at what's going on.

They come in and they talk the next day about some of the shows that are on TV and some of the ribald humor that is foisted off and you're sitting there saying, hey man, that's not me. I'm not, didn't you watch that?

No, really not into that. I don't spend my night waiting up for Saturday Night Live and then talk about it the next morning in the office. Beloved, I want you to understand what it says right here in this passage is God's Word.

[ 15 : 42 ] It's His explicit instruction to His children. He says, don't partner with them. We're not to be entertained or occupied with the sinfulness of our world.

You know, you walk through the grocery store and right there on eye level are what kind of magazines? Informative things about how to do your taxes and, you know, no, what's out there? It's all the salacious gossip from an unbelieving world right there at eye level. I got to tell you, I go into doctor's offices and I would prefer that there were magazines like, you know, Peterson's Hunting or something like that.

And guess what's always there? People magazine. I don't pick it up. Do you know why I don't pick it up? I don't need to know who is shacking up with so-and-so currently.

I don't need to see all the slinky stuff and pay attention. That is not what God called me to do. And I want to encourage you this morning, if you're sitting here and you're part of the kingdom, you're part of the family of God, you don't have to go out of your way to be different.

[ 16 : 54 ] Just don't join in. Second, the passage makes a very interesting statement. It says, do be light in dark places. Now, look at that.

It says, but instead expose them. When Paul instructed the Ephesians to reprove and expose the unfruitful works of darkness, he was not really calling believers to be the hateful critics of the darkness.

How many of you are aware of Westboro Baptist Church? Raise your hand if you know what I'm speaking about when I say Westboro Baptist Church.

Okay? They have taken it upon themselves in a very ungodly fashion to end up demonstrating at funerals, et cetera, and just saying some horrible ungodly things.

That's not what God has called us to do. When it says that we are to expose or reprove them, he's not talking about kind of being like Jonah and stomping through the city necessarily.

[ 17 : 59 ] You guys are toast. God hates you. You know, that's not what we were called to do. I remember hearing a story of a Bible college student in North Carolina.

Judith and I lived there many years ago. And this Bible college student was deeply convicted about his need to share the gospel. And so what he decided he would do is he would go down to the local drag race site and he hired a sound truck.

This was in the old days. Okay? These were sound trucks with the big megaphones out the side, you know, and he parked it on a little knoll above the drag strip. And he was just letting people have it with the sound system.

I mean, y'all down there are going to hell! And he was really getting after them. Well, guess what drag sounds are like? Does anybody know? I don't, having ever been there, but Dwayne, are they pretty loud?

I mean, what these people did was they just absolutely drowned him out. They never went up the hill to talk to him. They just, you know, they let the, probably burned a lot of nitrous and whatever else, but they were just blasting their engines and eventually he gave up.

[ 19 : 04 ] Now, is that what God's called us to do? The answer is, no, no, no. Okay. So, what is being said? The Greek word carries the idea of exposing the darkness.

And, in essence, what we are to do is turn on the light so the darkness can be seen for what it is. Turn on the light so the darkness can be seen for what it is. It actually involves the idea of not only drawing attention to the problem but working to convince the person to change.

That's what this Greek word carries. Probably a good illustration of that would be over in Matthew chapter 18 verse 15. So, keep your finger in Ephesians and turn back a little bit. Go to Matthew chapter 18 verse 15.

Classic use of the word and a good illustration of what you and I are called to do. Matthew chapter 18 written primarily in relationship to our dealing with one another within the family of God but applicable in that it gives us an idea of how we are to go about correcting dealing with sin in the world around us.

Verse 15 If your brother sins against you go and tell him his fault between you and him alone if he listens to you you have gained your brother.

[ 20 : 30 ] What is the objective of that passage? It is not to do a drive-by shooting and identify the sinful problem in the person's life. Hey you're a jerk bye no that's not it it's you know it seems you're having problems with relationships have you ever stopped to wonder why that is?

Click well yeah I am having problems with relationships relationships well let me talk to you about the person who made a radical difference in my life in the area of relationships and brought me into relationship with the Lord there's a way to do it this verse is talking about turning the light on so people can see the mess they're in let me let me have you also go back if you would to the passage in Matthew chapter 5 you're there in Matthew 18 so turn back just a little bit more to the passage that we looked at last week Matthew chapter 5 verse 14 through 16 we're saved to be lights and lights get put in dark places Matthew chapter 5 verse 14 you are the light of the world a city set on a hill cannot be hidden hey everybody around you where you work should know that you are different not because of haircut but because of life transforming power of the gospel that has turned you from being dark into light when everybody else is grumbling about the boss you're not in that when people brag about the fact that they're stealing from the company you're not in that when people are incessantly critical about everything going on and by the way that's easy to do you're not in that you're a person whose heart is focused on the only thing that brings redemption and hope to an unbelieving world and it's not

Washington it's the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ it is the fact that Jesus came into the world to save sinners and change their hearts and Jesus says you are the light you are the light and he says hey people don't light lamps without a reason and then he goes on and says this in verse 16 in the same way let your light shine before others so that they and who is the they it's the people that are in the dark so that they can see your good works and as it says there and give glory to your father who is in heaven so let me give you some illustrations of how the light exposes the darkness have you turn if you would now to Luke chapter 13 Luke chapter 13 and I want to kind of have you have a little bit of a picture of what takes place in this passage

Luke chapter 13 verse 10 through 17 is talking about where Jesus is going to heal a woman who is in a mess I was driving yeah I'll say this I was driving out towards Plain City not too long ago and I saw a place that said healing room and then a little subtext said walk ins welcome what would ever happen I won't go there walk ins welcome I mean that's better than urgent care wouldn't you agree with that do you need the address you know I thought to myself so every time Jesus did a miracle guess what it was the real thing it wasn't like take two and see me in the morning it was like you need to help with that bang it's done and anyway here we are Luke chapter 13 now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the

Sabbath and there was a woman who had a disabling spirit of 18 years she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself and when Jesus saw her he called her over and said woman you have been freed from your disability and he laid his hands on her and immediately she was made straight and she glorified God guess what that must have looked like Jesus wow I mean she was fired up how many of you have been sick longer than four days in a row does anybody know that sick is not fun it's not fun and when this lady got lit by the touch of Jesus and her life was changed she she was she was enthusiastic okay she was she was just beside herself oh how did that go well here we go verse 14 the ruler of the synagogue indignant because Jesus he healed on the Sabbath said there are six days in which work ought to be done come on these days see me in my office tomorrow you got a problem

[ 25 : 42 ] I'll take care of it then what did Jesus do he healed her publicly right in front of everybody on the Sabbath now we're getting forward to the part I want you to see look if you will okay as he said these things all his adversaries were put to shame and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him do you get that here's the point God does put us in dark places and he puts us in dark places so that the adversary may be put to shame you understand that and the adversary of the gospel hates the testimony of Christ and the power of the cross and so here's the question in the place where he has put you is Christ consistently getting credit for the fact that you're different than the rest of the unbelieving world and what's the answer it ought to be that way isn't that right shouldn't we be different what's the answer oh yes yes and as

Paul makes that argument he says listen be different now I want you to look at something else in relationship to this we see Jesus dealing with a problem there but I want you to look at another passage in relationship to this business of what we are all about 1st Peter chapter 2 verse 13 through 17 in 13 it says be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution whether to the emperor as supreme stop just for a second do you know does anybody know who the emperor was at this time by the way this was before Facebook does anybody know who the emperor was at this time can anybody tell me Nero folks there is no president that we've ever had or in all probability

we'll ever have that will top out who Nero was and how Nero behaved and if you have any question about that google it you'll find out

Nero is an absolute despicable wretch and here is what the spirit of God says is to be the attitude of believers towards those who he has placed in authority over us it says be subject for the Lord's sake to every institution what am I subject to I'm not subject to the constitution of the United States of America at the end of the day I am subject to the word of God and I want to be sensitive to the fact that that is my supreme authority and it calls me to have a tender heart in the community and place where he has put me or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good for this is the will of God that by doing what's the next word what's the next word by doing good by doing good by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men that's a pretty powerful argument isn't it the most powerful arguments against abortion today are not made in the halls of congress by senators do you know where the most powerful arguments are made they're made by willing believers who are willing to sacrifice their own resources to help those who are unwed mothers

I tell you the thing that has changed the conversation about the matter of pro-life in our community in our culture and I see a positive change happening are there abortions that take place is our government doing everything they can to enhance and encourage abortion yes but what is turning the tide is believers who are willing to be sacrificed and inconvenienced to minister to those who have children out of wedlock you stop and think about it if you were to kind of survey the history of the world you would discover that hospitals schools do you know why we have such an outstanding educational system in America do you know why Princeton Harvard Yale came into being they came into being because Bible believing people understood that God's people need to know the word will teach it will teach it

I do like to say that liberals are generous with other people's money and Christians are generous with their own I briefly picked up I am probably not as news savvy as some of the rest of you are but I briefly picked up that there has been a horrible storm tsunami in the Philippines and I got to tell you as soon as we have information on what we can do as believers we're going to step in and we're going to help we're going to fill that basket but we're going to help other people too why because we've been called to be light in dark places well there's a third thing that I want you to see going back to Ephesians chapter 5 it says there and I just can't when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible for anything that becomes visible is light let me kind of press this together because of time what remains in our study as we look at this part is that we as believers are to think as short timers now what does it mean to be a short timer huh it means we're checking out pretty soon okay we're not going to be here long and since we don't have a lot of time what we ought to be doing is focusing on the things that really really really really count

[ 31 : 50 ] I take this passage ultimately to be an appeal to us as believers that we are to be engaged in the sweetness of the gospel and bringing light to people whose lives are dark and hopeless our calling is to be active in pleading with unbelievers to come to Christ are we to be involved in doing good works so that God is glorified and the answer is absolutely but good works must be connected with a good word and you know what the word is is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief and as you are doing good things and you ought to be doing those you have to be sharing the thing that makes a difference for all of eternity can you improve the health and have people go to hell and what's the answer yes particularly if you don't share the gospel can you drill tube wells can you run electricity can you provide all kinds of physical cares and

I think we should but beloved woven into the absolutely desperate need of the world is the truth of the fact that men are sinners before a holy God and they have no hope apart from Christ I loved listening to Billy Graham on Thursday night and I got to tell you if you missed an opportunity all you have to do is go to his website and you can download it and watch it on YouTube you can watch it all different kinds of places the latter part of that it says that we are to be careful how we walk not as unwise but as wise we're expected to be wise in our calling turn over if you would just for a moment to

Colossians chapter 4 verse 5 Colossians chapter 4 verse 5 it says this walk in wisdom toward outsiders making the best use of time what's that mean what's that mean I have a friend time in pastoral ministry who earlier this fall had some flu like symptoms and he went into the doctor after three or four days of this and said you know I'm just having trouble shake this and the doctor said

okay well listen to him a little bit more and said well let me run some tests and he ran some blood tests and one thing led to another and eventually and fatal leukemia.

I've known my friend and his faithfulness to the gospel, the affection that he has for the Lord Jesus Christ, and this dear friend said to me, you know what?

I really don't know how long I'm going to live, but I want to live it for Jesus. And he said, it's been one thing for me to preach, not really thinking about the fact that I'm a short timer, and now I recognize I don't have much time.

[ 35 : 42 ] Look at the passage. Making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

We're light. You got that? In dark places. And people all around us are stepping off into the darkness of an eternity without Christ in hell forever.

So when was the last time that you were light enough that people ask you a reason for the hope that's in you?

When was the last time that a neighbor said to you, you know, why are you different? Well, I'm a vegetarian.

No. Why are you different? Well, it's because, you know, there was a time in my life where I was an absolute mess. I was dark. And the Spirit of God convinced me of my darkness and brought me to Christ.

[ 36 : 54 ] And I am different not because of me, but because of Him. And I would like to talk to you about Him and let you know that there's hope. A week and a half ago, I shared this already, but it's a great reminder.

I've been in the neighborhood where I am for, my wife would tell you, I don't know. It's a long time, five or six years. And I have ministered over and over again.

It took about six months for everybody in my neighborhood to figure out that I was a Baptist pastor, right? Once they figured out that I was a Baptist pastor, it was like, you know, they backed off a little bit.

But eventually they found out that I'm a pretty ordinary guy. I would help them with projects. And you can use my leaf blower. I have every tool imaginable. You know, share, share, share. Those kind of things. And the other day, my neighbor said to me, my aunt died.

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Yeah, and I'm wondering where she went. This is a lady who has told me over and over again, and I've shared the gospel with them about two or three times. Don't want to go there.

[ 37 : 58 ] Had a bad experience when I was, you know, young person, blah, blah. Don't want to have anything to do with church. Here she is saying to me, Baptist pastor, that she knows. I don't know where she went. I jumped on that.

And here's what I said. I said, you know, that is an important thing to think about. It's pretty, that's a good question. Where did she go? I don't know. I've never met her, so I have no idea. I said, but evidently, you think about that, don't you?

Every day. So what am I going to do? I'm sitting there, and she says, the next thing she says is, and by the way, would you do my funeral? Out of the clear blue.

I said, oh, I would be honored to. I said, but can I tell you what I would say, so you know ahead of time? What do you think I did?

There was a day when I was dark, and you were dark. You understand that? And Christ Jesus came into my life and saved me.

[ 39 : 10 ] And here is his marching orders for Tim Knoyer. You're a short timer here. Use it wisely. Let's close in prayer.

Precious Father in God, this morning, as we listen to the Word of God, we want to hear and understand and have our lives affected by the truth. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

And every one of us here can remember, those who are saved, can remember the time that we were dark, and you, by your grace, drew us out of that condition and have given us everlasting life.

And we want to use our lives in the time that remains for the testimony of Christ. Now, Lord, it's our privilege to enjoy the faithfulness of individuals who have chosen to be baptized in obedience.

Let their testimonies resonate in the hearts of those that are here that don't know Christ. And that's our prayer. Amen.