

Light Changes Everything

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 July 2024

[0 : 00] 8. Ephesians 5, verse 8, For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

Paul often, as he wrote, he did so by way of contrasts. Very often he would say, reminding Christians, this is what you once were, but this is now what you are.

You find that, in fact, as you go through in Ephesians, it went back to chapter 2, we find that you were dead in trespasses and sins. You once walked according to the course of the world.

You were children of wrath, even us others. But now, that's what he says in verse 4, but God being rich in mercy, where God comes into your life and changes and transforms it.

Again, in verse 13 of chapter 2, we have the same idea. He says, But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

[1 : 13] So Paul often works by these sort of contrasting pictures of what once we were and what now we have become. And it's important for us to remember that we, just as it tells us in this particular verse, you were, that's what he says, for at one time you were darkness, but now are light in the Lord.

Not just you were in darkness. We were in darkness. But it's deeper than that. We actually were darkness. And when you think about it, that's an awful picture.

And that's how everybody is without Christ. That's how we once were. Darkness. Not just in darkness, but darkness. Darkness. So before we come to look at positively, let us look at first what we were.

We were in darkness. And this is, of course, the darkness of sin. That's what happened whenever sin entered into this world. And it's our, what we use the expression, a default position.

It's what we are. And sadly, it's what by nature we love. Because we're told in scripture that men love darkness rather than light.

[2 : 31] And whether we accepted it or not, that was our preferred position. Before we became Christians, we preferred the darkness. Yes, there might have been leanings towards the light.

There might have been drawings towards the light. But the bottom line was darkness was what ruled us because we were darkness. And it's not until we come to the light that we realized just how dark we actually were.

And this darkness is an awful thing. Because in that darkness, there is also a sense of despondency and a sense of despair. People aren't aware of it.

But that's exactly how it is. And I've seen, I can still remember, a couple of occasions where this was brought so forcibly home to me.

Where I was visiting people. And there are two in particular that come to my mind. In the last week of their life, it was not at the same time.

[3 : 39] And I was trying to say a little about Jesus and didn't want to hear anything. And I asked, can I pray with you?

No, don't want prayer. And what I found so extraordinary is that there seemed to be just, there was almost a darkness you could feel.

And a sense of despair and despondency. That didn't want the light in any shape or form. And this is part almost of the mystery of iniquity where this darkness wants to go deeper and deeper.

Doesn't want the light in any shape or form. And even when you're holding out light, don't want it. And it's, it had a, it had a real impact upon me, this sense of the hopelessness and the despair that is in that darkness.

But that's exactly, these were sort of where the, where it was being displayed in a very clear way. And what I was thinking was, just as a Christian gets little glimpses of glory along the way, we get little, little tears, we, we, we snippets, as it were, little touches.

[4 : 53] and as we get closer to glory, our hearts seem to be going there more and more to reverse us through for those out of Christ.

That darkness is beginning to envelop them more and more. The, the lostness, the despondency, the darkness, because that's what hell ultimately is, is outer darkness.

darkness. And it's an incredibly solemn thought, but that, that is the nature, that's how we were before the light. And it's also a darkness of ignorance, because light, light speaks to us of knowledge, of understanding.

And chapter four, verse 18 tells us, they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their heart.

And you know, it's an awful thing to have our understanding darkened by sin. This ignorance that is spoken of here is not the ignorance of intellect, because there are many intellectual giants in this world who, as far as spiritual understanding is concerned, have none.

[6 : 10] They are in darkness. In fact, I'm sure it's the same with you. I've had very clever people tell me when I became a Christian to get rid of that nonsense.

That's what, that was the actual word used. Clever people, far smarter than I ever would be. But that's because of this word ignorance, which is a spiritual blindness that envelops the mind.

And they actually think, genuinely think, that the whole Christian, that it's foolishness. But the Bible tells us that that's exactly what they think.

Remember how Paul writing elsewhere, he talks about the preaching of the gospel, that for some, it's a stumbling block, for others, it's foolishness. There are people tonight who actually would look at you coming to the prayer meeting and think, how foolish is that?

And the reason is because of the ignorance, the spiritual ignorance that is brought about by the darkness that has enveloped their heart and their mind.

[7 : 19] And you know, it's an incredibly solemn thing. And then there's also the darkness of the curse. You see, there's the curse and sin. And you remember how God's judgment came on Israel.

Remember how the plagues, and one of the plagues was darkness. An incredible darkness enveloped the land, the whole land of Egypt with an exception, the land of Goshen.

The part of Egypt, Goshen, was in light. That's where God's people were. The rest of Egypt was plunged into the most extraordinary darkness.

darkness. And so, that's where we once were, under the curse, because of sin, ignorant to the things of God.

But thankfully, that has changed because we're told here, for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

[8 : 19] And that light in the Lord, it brings various things. The first thing it does, it brings reconciliation. When the light comes into your experience, and as we know that the dawning of the light can be so different for different people, not everybody is a Saul of Tarsus, not everybody has a clear moment when they know they've passed from death to life.

Many people, as we've often said, it's like the dawn of the day. And if you've ever been out through the night and experienced coming in from the darkness and see just that I've done so on two or three occasions, you've been out through the night and you just, you can't say at any particular moment now it's light.

There is a particular time when everything is dark and black and then gradually it moves into a world of shadows and then growing shapes and things, there's a growing clarity and eventually everything becomes clear.

And that's how it is sometimes in the spiritual journey for people. They can't put a particular day or time, but they do know that they're on a spiritual journey where they were darkness and now they are light.

And so there is, this is a great thing is there is reconciliation because now we are at one with the Lord and we feel at home with the Lord.

[9 : 46] that's why in Romans we're saying now we call him Abba, Father. We can go straight maybe as children we recited the Lord's Prayer our Father which art in heaven repeated it knew it of by heart.

But when you become a Christian you can say our Father, my Father. Because you feel this acceptance. How? Have you made that in yourself?

No. It is the ministry of the Spirit assuring us the Spirit ministered to our spirit that we are children of God.

And it's one of the most liberating experiences that we have where we've come from the darkness and now we have this sense of belonging. We know who we are. We're family.

We belong to one another. You remember that when you became a Christian? All of a sudden there was you felt one with your brothers and sisters. People you used to see over there you didn't really know them but all of a sudden there's this bond this link and this is all through the Spirit ministering within us that we are all children all family.

[10 : 59] We all belong to the Lord. And so this is a wonderful time where we're brought into the light. You know you could be out on a really cold windy night.

It's really dark. the wind is howling. You're going to visit someone. It's a good friend and you're struggling with the wind. It's pouring rain. Everything is dark. Everything is black. You reach the door.

The door's locked. You ring the bell and knock the door and they come to the door and they, oh, come on in. And if that's happened to you you remember the warmth, the light, the friendship.

And it's so good to get out of the pouring rain and the wind. And in a sense that's how it was in our journey in salvation. This sense of the warmth, the love, the friendship.

Just the, I'm home. This is where I belong. Can you remember it? The sense of belonging, the sense of realization. This is me. I'm now at home.

[12 : 03] And also it's a state of knowledge because light brings knowledge. Light opens our understanding. We have now come to see while we were dark, when we were in darkness and dark, yes, we may have grasped certain things and understood certain things, but our understanding was so limited.

But now, and I'm sure like me, you lament and say, I wish I knew more. Well, be encouraged. You know a lot more than you used to know.

Because when you become a Christian, you grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Both these things take part. Grace and knowledge are working together and we need to seek to grow more and more in grace and in knowledge.

And as we grow in knowledge, we do so with the word and we do so married to the experiences that we go through. You know, as a Christian, the experiences that you go through today, you're able to understand them far more.

Yes, because you've been on the journey longer, but your knowledge of the word is greater. And the word tied and married to the experiences you go through help your knowledge to grow so that you have a greater understanding of God's ways, God's purposes, of who God is.

[13 : 34] And so there's this great sense of knowledge. You know who you belong to. You know why you're here. You know where you're going. You have an understanding of God's love to you.

You have a knowledge of God's peace in your heart. There's an understanding of the cross. There's an understanding of the resurrection. All these things, darkness, is gone.

It's now light. Now I know there'll always be days when we're not so conscious of the light. And sometimes we say, I am in darkness.

But you won't be left there. Micah said, Micah says, when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to me. And you know the Lord will. Even if there are times we're struggling, the Lord will reveal himself again to us.

And so the fault is never with the Lord. It's never that his light has ever dimmed. But so often, the clouds of our own sin and all the other things come in and block the way.

[14 : 38] And just finally, it tells us there that we are to walk as children of light. And it tells us very simply of three things there. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

That idea of good is goodness. That should be our life where we are seeking the good of other people.

If God's goodness is part of our lives, if the Lord's light is within us, then it is only natural that we are seeking the well-being, seeking the good.

So we're wanting to encourage and to edify and to strengthen and to build up and to do good at whatever opportunity we have. Right or righteousness.

In other words, we are to be right before God and before one another. A right man. We talk, we talk of a right, well, that's what the Christian should be, a right person and a true person.

[15 : 47] No deceit, no dishonesty, no deception, but seeking to deal honestly and to deal well with everybody. There shouldn't be any hidden things.

Our lives shouldn't have any hidden things. Not that we can hide from God, but our lives should be open. Paul so often throughout says that we are to live in this sincerity, which is meaning, there's various meanings that he gives, but one of them is we're searched like under the spotlight, under the sunlight.

And if our lives are lived in a right way, then we can live comfortably with one another. You know if you're at the airport and you're going away and you're you know your baggage goes through a scanner.

If you had something that's in the forbidden category in your case, you'd be kind of sweating a wee bit saying, I wonder if they'll find that.

But if everything's all right, then you're okay, you're not worried at all. Well that's the kind of idea we should be, that our lives are going through this scanner so that before God and before one another.

[17 : 02] Now of course that convicts us because so often as we look at our lives we say, oh, because we all sin. We all, as we face up to what it is saying here, we all do wrong.

But we should walk as a light. Our lives should be a living testimony. Jesus said, you are the lights of the world. The light of the Lord should shine through us.

I read of a diamond somewhere, you probably read of that, that if it's exposed to the sunlight for a while and then you put it into a darkened room, it continues to shine. In a sense, that's how we should be as we come from the presence of the Lord.

Like Moses, remember when he was up on the mountain, up with the Lord. When he came back down, his face so shone that the Israelites couldn't look at him. He had to put a veil over his face.

They said, we can't look at you as he came from the presence of the Lord. So our lives ought to be a light that shines. And you sometimes say to yourself, why are people so, why is the world so opposed to Christianity?

[18 : 10] For that very reason. That the world can't handle the light of the Christian. The world would want the Christian removed.

That's why they want the Bible removed. Because the Bible is a light that bothers them. the Christian is often a light that bothers them. But the other side to it is that the Christian as a light is a huge influence for good.

And I'm sure as you and I look back over our lives, we can remember Christians who shone. Christians whose lives influenced us. Not just by what they said, but by what they were.

there. So Paul is saying here, here's the acid test, threefold acid test for our life. In order to live right, ask yourself this, is it good?

If it is, it's right. Is it good? Is it right? Is it true? These are the three principles. If it's good, if it's right, is it true?

[19 : 14] May the Lord help us then to have this governing our lives in order that we may walk in the light, displaying the light as we have been now delivered from the darkness.

Let us pray. Lord, we give thanks for our time together. And as we reflect on your word and what it tells us, so often we feel we come so far short.

But we give thanks for your patience how you deal with us. And we give thanks for the desire within our heart to walk in the light and to be reflectors of your light so that the image of Christ may shine in us more and more.

We pray then to bless us as a congregation. Bless every home and every family. Again, we pray your blessing upon our young people and the holiday club that's taking place.

And we give thanks for the huge input of Scott and Fiona. And we pray for them, for Scott and Fiona and for Katie Bell and Lily May as they will be moving down to North Harris.

[20 : 23] We pray that their time there will be a time of blessing as it has been with us here. And watch over them, we pray. And we ask, Lord, that you will watch over all of us.

Do us good, we pray. Guide us and keep us and guard us at every time. Take away our sin in Jesus' name. Amen.