

Darkness and Light

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Date: 23 March 2025

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[0 : 00] Well, let us worship God by singing to his praise in Psalm 27, page 236 in the Blue Psalm Books, reading from the beginning of the psalm.

The Lord's my light and saving health, who shall make me dismayed? My life's strength is the Lord, of whom then shall I be afraid? When, as mine enemies and foes, most wicked persons all, to eat my flesh against me rose, they stumbled and did fall.

Against me the one host encamp, my heart yet fearless is. Though war against me rise, I will be confident in this. One thing I of the Lord desired and will seek to obtain, that all days of my life I may within God's house remain.

That I the beauty of the Lord behold may and admire, and that I in his holy place may reverently inquire. For he in his pavilion shall me hide in evil days, in secret of his tent me hide, and on a rock me raise.

Psalm 27, verses 1 to 5, to God's praise. The Lord's my light and saving health, who shall make me dismayed? The Lord's my light and saving health, who shall make me dismayed?

[1 : 30] My life's strength is the Lord, of whom then shall I be afraid?

When, as mine enemies and foes, most wicked persons all, to eat my flesh against me rose, they stumbled and did fall.

Against me, though a ghost encamp, my heart yet fearless is.

Though war against me rise, I will be confident in this.

One thing I of the Lord desired and will seek to obtain, that all days of my life I may within God's house remain.

[3 : 11] That I the beauty of the Lord behold may and admire, and that I in his holy place may reverently inquire.

For he in his pavilion shall me hide in evil days, in secret of his tent me hide, and on a rock me raise.

Amen. Well, let us now call upon the name of God in prayer. Let us pray. Gracious and ever-blessed God, we give thanks that we can come into the presence of the Almighty this evening, and that we can say, and that we can say, and that we can say, and that we can say, and that we can do so with the words of the psalmist, saying with him, one thing I of the Lord desired and will seek to obtain, that all days of my life I may within God's house remain.

And it is our great privilege, Lord, to be gathered together in the Lord's house, where the people of God have assembled in order to worship and to lift up the name of the King of Kings, and to give thee the honor and to give thee the praise and the glory, which is due to God alone.

And we come, Lord, seeking to receive a glimpse of the glory of the God whom we worship, saying with the psalmist again, that I, the beauty of the Lord, behold, may and admire, and that I may in his holy place may reverently inquire, or that we might see something this evening of the beauty of Christ, of his splendor and of his majesty and of his glory.

[5 : 42] That is our great hope and that is our great aspiration in worship, that we might meet with the triune God. That Christ might be in our midst.

We would plead the promise of Jesus to us, that where two or three are gathered together in my name, that I will be there in the midst. And we seek not to presume upon that promise, but we do seek to plead it and to say with another, Come, Lord Jesus.

Come into our midst and speak to our hearts. Speak to our conscience. Teach us. Say to us, as was said to the prophet of old, This is the way.

Walk ye in it. Direct us and guide us, Lord. Give us wisdom. Give us an understanding of the truth. Give us not to corrupt it or not to deviate from it in any way, but rather that it might be a lamp unto

our feet and a light unto our path, that it might be more valuable to us than silver and gold, and that it might be sweeter to our taste than honey, even honey from the comb.

And so, Lord, we pray that our worship this evening would be acceptable in thy sight. As we read the word and as we sing the word, and as we seek to meditate upon it, as it is broken down to us, grant that it would not be handled deceitfully, but that it might be rightly divided.

[7 : 26] And we pray that it might come to us with power. For thy word tells us that the word is quick and powerful, and that it is sharper than any two-edged sword, that it is the discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart.

And so we pray, Lord, this evening, that thy word would be powerful in our own experience, that it might be life-changing in our experience, that the God of the word would speak to us individually and corporately through the word of God.

And so, Lord, meet with us, we pray. Bless us in the midst of our own individual needs. We give thanks that the psalmist could say, and that we can say with him, O Lord, thou hast me searched and known.

Thou knowest my sitting down and rising up. Yea, all my thoughts afar are known to thee. And if our very thoughts are known to thee, then surely our every circumstance, or every trial, or every anxiety, or every sorrow.

And we give thanks that the God who knows these things is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. The God who has loved his people, and given his Son for them.

[8 : 54] The God who has ears to hear, who is the hearer and the answerer of prayer. The God who knows even the cry of the heart, and who hears the very groanings of prayer.

We give thanks, Lord, for the spirit of adoption that the people of God have received, whereby they cry, Abba, Father.

And we give thanks for that spirit which bears witness to our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

We thank thee for the inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, and that is reserved for every believer in heaven.

For when the chief shepherd shall appear, he shall give to his own, to all that love him, a crown of righteousness, which shall not fade away. And we pray that in the midst of the afflictions and the troubles of this life, that we would have grace to set our affection on the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God on high, that we would be mindful day by day that here we have no continuing city, but that we must look to a city that is to come, that this country is not our long home, but that we must be seeking a better country, even a heavenly country.

[10 : 23] And so lift our eyes and lift our hearts, even this evening, to the one who is the creator of the heavens and the earth, the God who has taken to do with his people, the God who has made exceeding great and precious promises to them, and the God who has promised never to leave them nor to forsake them.

And so bless, we pray thee, the sick and the suffering, those who are laid aside with troubles and with illness of body and of mind.

We pray with those who are struggling with addiction and for their families and for their friends. Bless those in hospitals and upon sick beds and those caring for them and those near and dear to them.

We pray thy blessing too, to be upon those who mourn, those who mourn afresh and those who have been mourning over months and years. We commit their case to the God who is able to bless those who mourn by giving comfort to them.

We even commit their case to the one who in all of our afflictions was himself afflicted, giving thanks that we do not have a high priest that has not been touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but has been tempted and tested in all points, like as we have, and yet without sin.

[11 : 45] And so one who is able to minister to us, to speak comfort to us, and to build us up. One who is able to make continual intercession for us, naming our names before the great throne in heaven, and ensuring that where the good work has begun, that it might be performed and completed, even until the day of Jesus Christ, when he shall return with his angels and with a cloud of glory, and when all of his jewels shall be made up, and all the sheep shall be gathered into the fold, and not one shall be left.

And so, Lord, we pray that we might live in light of that great hope that is set before us. Bless us this evening. Go before us and do us good, and forgive us graciously for all of our sin.

For Christ's sake. Amen. Well, let us again sing to God's praise, this time in Psalm 112.

In the Sing Psalms version of the psalm, you'll find that on page 151. We're singing from, again, from the beginning of the psalm.

We're singing three stanzas. Praise God. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord and finds delight in following his word. His children will be mighty in the land.

[13:15] His line will know the blessing of God's hand. Riches and wealth within his house are found. His righteousness forever will abound. The man who stands for mercy, truth, and right will find the darkness turned to morning light.

Good is the man who gives and freely lends to his affairs with justice he attends. Surely a righteous man will stand secure. His memory forever will endure.

We're going to sing these three stanzas of Psalm 112, singing together to God's praise. Praise God. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord and finds delight in following his word.

His children will be mighty in the Lord. Praise God. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord and finds delight in following his word.

His children will be mighty in the Lord. His life will know the blessing of God's hand.

[14:40] Riches and wealth within his paths are found.

His righteousness forever will abound. His children will be mighty in the Lord.

Through his affairs with justice he attends. Surely a righteous man will stand secure.

His memory forever will endure. Let us now read God's word as we find it in Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians.

Second Corinthians and from chapter four. We're going to read the whole chapter together. Second Corinthians chapter four, reading from the beginning of the chapter.

[16:26] Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways.

We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word. But by the open statement of the truth, we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

We shall shine out of darkness, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at once we have the same spirit of faith, according to what has been written.

[17:30] I believed, and so I spoke. We also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people, it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart, though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. Amen. We pray that the Lord would bless his own word to us, and to his name be all the praise and all the glory.

Well, let us sing again, this time in Psalm 33. Psalm 33 on page 245. We're reading from verse 3. And these are verses which speak to us about the power of God, particularly in the creation of the world.

[18:54] Psalm 33 and from verse 5. Sorry, from verse 5. That is that there is evidence of the covenant mercy, the loving kindness of the Lord throughout all of the earth.

The heavens by the word of God did their beginning take, and by the breathing of his mouth he all their hosts did make. The waters of the seas he brings together as an heap, and in storehouses, as it were, he lays up the deep.

Let earth and all that live therein with reverence fear the Lord. Let all the world's inhabitants dread him with one accord. And that word dread isn't speaking of a slavish fear, but rather a reverence

and a godly fear.

For he did speak the word, and done it was without delay. Established it firmly stood, whatever he did say. A psalm which speaks to us about the enormous power and might of God, and how we, in response to that, should come to him with reverence, with godly fear, with humility.

Let us do so as we sing Psalm 33, verses 5 to 9, to God's praise, to judgment and to righteousness, a love he bareth still. Amen. To judgment and to righteousness, a love he bareth still, the lovely kindness of the Lord, the earth through arms of him.

[20 : 59] The heavens by the word of God in their beginning day, and by the breathing of his mind, the other hosted may.

The waters of the seas he brings together as can be, and in storm and stings as it were, he may have a face.

For God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

One of the Apostle Paul's recurring themes throughout his letters is to explain to the Lord's people what it is that's happened to them, the change that's taken place in their lives.

And so time and again, not just here, but elsewhere throughout his letters, we find him explaining to us what we were when we were out of Christ, before we were Christians, what animated us, what was it that kept us going, what were our aims and objectives in life, who was controlling us, who was influencing us.

[22 : 55] And then he speaks also about what we are in Christ, the great change that has come upon us, that we are new creatures, what it means to be a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Outstanding. So much of the Apostle Paul's letters is just this, him explaining to the Christian what a Christian actually is and what you actually are.

And the other thing that he explains to us is how that has come to pass. How did you go from this to this? How did you go from death to life, from being out of Christ to in Christ?

Or in the language of our text, how did you go from darkness to light? What you were, what you are. And of course, it's important for us to understand ourselves.

The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates spent a great deal of time explaining that phrase, know thyself, know thyself.

[24 : 00] He said, central to all understanding, to all knowledge in this life is a knowledge of yourself. And Socrates wasn't inspired by any stretch of the imagination, but what he said there was true.

How important for us, in any walk of life, to understand ourselves, to understand who we are, perhaps what we were, the changes that have come upon us.

It's essential. And if it's essential in other walks of life, then it's certainly essential. Indeed, it's vital in the Christian life and for the Christian life to know what you were, to know what the Lord has done, and to know what you are as a Christian, to know what a Christian is, to further discover what you are and what God has done for you.

So what I want us to do this evening in the short time that we have is just to consider two things, what we were out of Christ and what we are in Christ.

Or if you're not a Christian here tonight, what we're considering, first of all, is what you currently are. And then we'll consider afterwards what you could be if you yield your life to Jesus Christ.

[25 : 16] So these two things. Firstly, what we were. Now, the first thing I think we have to understand here is the context into which the Apostle Paul was writing.

He was writing, of course, to the Corinthians, to the church in Corinth. And Corinth was, at the time, really the main city in Greece. Now, you think today, boys and girls, you think, well, what's the capital of Greece?

And it's not Corinth, it's Athens. You think, well, surely the main city in Greece is Athens. And in many ways it is. But I suppose Athens was, in that day, what Edinburgh was to Scotland.

It was, as it were, the cultural capital and the historic capital. But Corinth was more like the Glasgow of Greece. This was the city of trade.

This is where the boats came in from the west and they traded and they carried these goods a few miles to the east. And then there was another port there. And so it was the gateway to the east.

[26 : 17] And this was a buzzing city. It was a metropolitan city, full of different cultures, ethnicities, different people groups, and different religions as well.

It was a place of great opportunity for a man who wanted to make money. It was a place of great opportunity for the gospel as well. And the Apostle Paul, as he went to other cities, so he came to Corinth.

And we find him preaching in Corinth. We find people being converted in Corinth. And we find a church beginning to grow in Corinth.

And yet, the context really for much of these letters to the Corinthians is that of problems within the church. And there were numerous problems within the church.

Problems with regards to discipline. Problems with regards to, actually, some of the core elements of the faith. Problems with regards to the Lord's Supper. But one of the other problems was a more personal problem for the Apostle Paul.

[27 : 18] And that's that he himself was coming under criticism. Criticism we know from false teachers. From people who were trying to gain a following for themselves.

And he was criticized for many things. He was criticized for being immoral. Now, he wasn't. He showed that he wasn't. But they leveled that criticism against him. He was criticized for not telling the whole truth.

For being deceitful. For being weak in himself. Criticized for having given up and having left the people. But one of the criticisms, which is particularly relevant here, is that he was criticized for being ineffective.

Ineffective in Corinth. People saying, well, Paul, if you preached differently, if you acted differently, if you spoke differently, if you spoke a little bit more into the culture, then you'd be far more effective. And there would be far more converts. And the church would be far bigger. And some of these criticisms were very personal. We read, is it in chapter 10 of this letter, in verse 10, they said about him that his bodily presence is weak.

[28 : 23] He's a small man. He doesn't look like much. And his speech is contemptible. They look down upon his speech. And of course, Greece was the center of rhetoric.

The way to speak. The way to speak eloquently. The way to put an argument together. And of course, the Apostle Paul, in many ways, just disregarded all of that. He thought that much of it, not all of it, but much of it, was a nonsense.

He didn't take them on. And for that, he was criticized. For that, he was called ineffective. You would have so many more converts, Paul, if you spoke differently, if you acted differently.

And you would certainly have more converts, Paul, if you spoke about different things. And you know that the preaching of the cross is foolishness to the Greeks. So why do you keep on banging on about it?

About this cross? About this crucifixion? You know that the Greek people aren't going to accept that. That it's going to be folly to them. Yes, okay, it's in the Christian system, but put that to one side.

[29 : 27] Or certainly don't mention it as often as you are. And all this talk of the resurrection, of Christ rising from the dead, of one day ourselves rising from the dead to stand at the judgment seat, you know that the people don't want to hear that.

You know that they'll laugh you off the stage for that. They're not going to accept it. And Paul, all this talk about sin, about our sexual immorality, all this talk about needing to repent, you know, you could have so many more people, so many more Christians in Corinth, so many more followers, if you just toned it down a little bit.

That is essentially the criticism that is being leveled against him. And I suppose it's a criticism that is leveled against the faithful church in every day.

In every day. And the Apostle Paul's answer to that is an answer that we want to hear and to listen to very carefully. He says in verse 2 of this chapter, in defense of himself and of those like him and of his gospel, he says, but we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways.

We refuse to practice cunning or deceit or to tamper with God's word. That's what we refuse to do. That's essentially what you're telling us to do.

[30 : 46] But rather, by the open statement or the declaration or the manifestation of the truth, that is the truth of God's word, we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

Then he says in verse 5, for what we proclaim is not ourselves, we preach not ourselves, we don't preach about ourselves, we don't seek to be central in our own preaching so that people see the

preacher and not hear the message.

but rather, we preach Jesus Christ as Lord with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. You know, the apostle Paul believed in becoming a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks. But that didn't mean that he was going to resort to their methods. That didn't mean that he was going to speak in the way that they spoke. That didn't mean that he was going to muddy the waters with Greek philosophy.

It didn't mean that he was going to tamper with the word of God. That's what he says there, isn't it? We didn't practice cunning or tamper with God's word.

[31 : 54] That word tamper is the word that was used for diluting wine, diluting it with water. And he was saying, we're not going to do that in our preaching. We're not going to pretend that the word of God says things that it doesn't say in order to make the people feel better about themselves.

neither are we voy about the resurrection and the fact that one day we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

We're not voy there a heaven to be gained, but that there is a hell to be shunned. You see, this is the thing. The apostle's aim wasn't to fill a church. It wasn't to have more members in the church in Corinth. It wasn't to have more people to profess faith. It wasn't to have more people say, well, I was converted under the preaching of the apostle Paul. His aim wasn't to have more people saying that they were Christians. His aim certainly wasn't to gain a following for himself.

Rather, his aim was to see the name of Christ glorified in Corinth. His aim was to be faithful to his calling. Woe is me if I preach not the gospel. I have met with Jesus Christ. I have seen his glory on the road to Damascus, he could say. I'm not going to preach myself. What am I? I am an earthen vessel, he says in verse 7. A jar of clay. I am nothing. Why would I preach myself? I'm not going to be a showman and try to attract people to me. I will preach Christ and him crucified. I will show his beauty, his glory. I will preach his truth. That's what I will do. And to some it shall be a savor or a fragrance of death unto death. But to others it shall be a fragrance of life unto life.

But we preach Christ crucified, he said in his first letter. To the Jews it's a stumbling block. And to the Greeks it's foolishness. But to them that are called, it is Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. To them that are called, to them that the Holy Spirit applies it to, it is salvation.

[34 : 23] It is forgiveness. It is heaven. And that is what he saw as his own work. Not success, not numbers, but to be faithful to the Lord. And as he said to Timothy, preach the word. Be instant in season and out of season. And yet we might say, well Paul, if this is true, then why are there so few who believe in the city of Corinth? Why actually, yes, there's a church that's grown up here and that's a wonderful thing in itself. But look out with the walls of the church. Not saying that the church then met as it met today, but you understand the figure. How few there are here in all of the tens of thousands in the city of Corinth. And you know, we might say the same ourselves. How few there are worshipping in all of the churches in Stornoway combined this evening? There's a good chance that they would all fit in this building. There's a good chance. How few there are. And why is that? Is it that all of the ministers in Stornoway haven't been doing their job properly? Is that what it is? Is it that they haven't been preaching as they ought to have been preaching? Is it that they haven't been speaking into the culture as they ought to have speaking into the culture? As they ought to have been. Or to put it another way, what about yourself? Now, many of you here are Christians. Some of you perhaps can't remember a time when you didn't love the Lord. But many of you, you remember a time when you didn't.

And you remember a time when you rejected the gospel. And then there came a day in your life when you ceased to reject it. Now, what changed? Or to put it another way, why did you remain in unbelief so long? Why did you remain in unbelief? Well, the apostle explains that. He says in verse three, and even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing.

You see, he's been accused of veiling the gospel by preaching all of these doctrines, by actually muddying the waters. And you could make it simple. You know, the Greek people, as most people do today, they love to hear about morality. They love to hear about how to live, to be content, to be happy. Preach about these things. Preach about the good life. That's what people like Socrates and Plato did, wasn't it? They love to hear preaching on community, and how the church can be together, and who look after each other, and love one another. Just focus on that kind of stuff.

Surely that will attract people. You're just veiling the gospel. You're veiling the truth by focusing on all that other stuff. And what he says is this. He says, well, if the gospel is veiled, it's only veiled to those who are perishing. In other words, the veil isn't on the side of the message. The veil isn't on

the side of the gospel. Rather, it's on your side. The veil is on your heart. That's where the veil is. You remember what he says to the

Ephesians. Ephesians 4, verse 18. He speaks of those who have their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart. Why is it that you don't see the glory of this message? Why is it that there are people who don't receive it and accept it? Well, the message of Scripture is this. It is because of the blindness of the heart. Now, don't get me wrong. There are many churches even throughout their own land, and people sit like you sit tonight, and they're not hearing a gospel. They're not hearing the message properly to repent and to believe in a crucified Savior. They're not hearing it, so they're not believing it. But that's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about those who do hear it, who hear the truth, and yet who continue to reject it. And what the apostle is saying here is that they reject it because they are blind, because they have a veil over their soul, over their spiritual eyes, over their heart. And you know, friend, even the brightness of the midday sun, the brightness of the sun, even as we saw today, even that is hidden from a blind man or a blind woman. They can't see that. They can't see, even though it's so bright to our eyes that we can hardly look at it. To them, they can't see it because they are blind. And so it is with us, friends, by nature. As we come into this world, the carnal mind is enmity against the Lord. We are the enemies of God by nature. We say, as we mentioned this morning, we will not have this man to reign over us because I want to reign over my own life. I want to do things my own way. I want to be essentially my own boss. And so it is that many of us sat in churches and we heard the gospel and we saw others round about us being converted and witnessing to us. And we had parents who prayed to us and who spoke to us. Our grandparents, brothers, sisters, sat in week by week under the truth and yet were unmoved by it.

Or perhaps moved sometimes, but it didn't really change us. We were, as it were, basking in gospel sunshine and yet it didn't affect us. And we didn't see it. We didn't believe. Why? Well, because our eyes were shut to it. Our ears were blocked so that we couldn't see, we couldn't hear. We were in darkness.

[40 : 07] In fact, the apostle says in another place, not only were we in darkness, but you were darkness. You were darkness. And that explains the veil that is upon your heart so that you cannot receive the truth because you were darkness. And that doesn't mean that you don't know the Bible or the stories that the Bible tells. It doesn't even mean that you don't know theology and the gospel. It doesn't mean that you don't know these things. But what it does mean is this, that these things haven't touched you. They haven't moved you. They haven't changed you. You don't really see the relevance of them to the here and to the now. You don't really see the urgency of them because of the fact that tomorrow is not promised. You hear these things, but they don't come to you with power, with life-changing power. And you might see those around you in the pews in front of you and behind you and beside you, people in your family, people in your friend's circle, people who you were in school with and they're converted. And you're not. It is the power of God unto salvation in their life, but not in your life. You see those around you who love the Lord, but you don't love the Lord.

And many of you remember being there, being there under the truth, hearing the gospel, but being unchanged. Why? Well, as we read, because the gospel was veiled to you. But let us dig a little deeper. The apostle takes us a little deeper. Why were we blind? Well, in verse 4 we read, in their case, that is those who are perishing. The God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. The God of this age or the God of this world is the one who blinds. You know, the word teaches us that this world, the world system, society at large, it moves to the sway of the prince of this world. That is of Satan.

You remember what Jesus said to the Pharisees. He said to them, and you know, you talk about being seeker sensitive. One thing that Jesus was not. He loved people and he came to their level, but he always spoke the truth to them. And you remember what he said to the Pharisees when they rejected him in his message. He said to them, you are of your father, the devil. Your father is not Abraham, and your father is certainly not God. Your father is the devil. And that is, of course, true of all those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ. God is not your father. That is evident by your works, by your life, by your rejection of his son. You are of your father, the devil. In other words, you move to his sway. You are more under his influence than the influence of God. And what is the greatest

work of the devil? Boys and girls, I wonder what you think the greatest work of the devil is. Well, we might think to cause wars, or to cause people to commit murders, to cheat, to steal, to corrupt. Well, we can be sure that the devil is in many of these things, and indeed in all of them. But really, the greatest work of the devil is to blind men's hearts from the truth, to keep the gospel out of your ears. And if the gospel gets into your ears, to keep it out of your heart. That is his great work, to persuade you otherwise, to persuade you not to, as we thought this morning, to deny yourself and to take up your cross and to follow him, but rather to persuade you to serve the world, and to love the world and the things that are in the world, really to serve him.

Now, that's valid. He doesn't tell you that, but that's essentially what he's doing. And you know what Satan's great dread is? You know, we all have worries and anxieties, and there are things that we dread happening. Well, do you know what Satan's great dread is? It is this, that he might lose you and that you might serve another master, that he might lose you and that you might serve Jesus Christ. That is his great dread, that he might lose you to the king. That's what our text says, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, or lest they see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. That's why he blinds your eyes, lest you see it, lest you see Christ, lest you receive him, lest you accept him, lest you give your life to him. You know, friend, I want to ask you, how successful has he been in your life? You know, many of you today are Christians.

[44 : 59] How successful was he in your own life before the Holy Spirit came with a resistible grace? And you might be here tonight, and you're still not a Christian. How successful has the devil been in your life in persuading you otherwise, in keeping you away from Christ, in deceiving you?

And you know, friends, there have perhaps been many times when you've heard the gospel, and when you've heard the need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to be saved, and when you've heard that it must be done now, that now is the accepted time, that now is today's day of salvation, and you've heard that, and you've felt the reality of it, and the power of it, and the urgency of it, and you've felt it speaking to you personally, and that you need to give your life to Christ. And if you die out of Christ tonight, that you're on a way to a lost eternity, and you've known that, and you've felt it. And then all of a sudden, well, another little voice comes into your mind and says, well, you're only young. There's plenty time for that yet.

There's a life to be lived. There's things to do. You don't want to bog yourself down with that, do you? Or perhaps it's more, well, are you really sure? Are you really persuaded that this is true? You know, this is a big sacrifice that you're making here. Should you not think about it? Make sure that you're not being rash about this? Should you not give it time? You know, friends, it's a privilege to see young people in our midst tonight, to see teenagers in our midst. It's not so long since I sat in this church as a teenager, going back 20 years. I remember seeing the galleries full of other teenagers, and many of them had become Christians. Many of them perhaps were like you, and they were thinking about becoming Christians. And they sat attentively listening to the Word, and they gave these things serious thought. But you know, friends, sadly, many of them didn't act upon it. They didn't act upon it. They said, well, I'll leave it. I'll give it a few years. I'll give it some time. And you know, friends, it came to nothing. And for all we know, it might never come to anything.

Perhaps for them, the opportunity is past. God's Spirit will not always strive with man.

You know, it's a solemn thing if there is light all around you, and people who are converted all around you, and yet you are still yourself blind to it all. Well, I'm seeing that the time is passing quicker than I would like it to. So let us move on to our second point, and we won't give as much time to this.

[47 : 39] We've seen what we wear. What about what we are? Because the next question, I suppose, is, well, if this is how we are by nature, why did you stop rejecting the Lord? What changed? And you know, we often considered conversion subjectively. So you think, well, what changed? I'll tell you what changed. I began to develop an interest in spiritual things. I began to see Christians a wee bit differently, and they weren't all doom and gloom, and actually they were in some ways people like myself, and yet they had something that I didn't have. They had a peace. They had a joy. They had an assurance that I didn't have. I began to come to church. Maybe a new minister came, and I felt that I could listen to him, and that I could understand him. And then I began to read the Word more, and I began to pray as I read it. And instead of just going to church on a Sunday morning or on a Sunday night, I began to go both ends. Before I knew it, I wanted to go to a prayer meeting. And then I found myself praying to the Lord, well, Lord, come into my life. I yield everything to you. And then I professed faith, and I became a Christian. And you know, for many of

us, that is true. That's the way that it is.

But it's subjective, isn't it? That is, it's a thing from our perspective. But what the Apostle Paul is doing here, and it's important that we follow him in it, is that he's treating our conversion, our salvation, objectively. Not from our perspective, as it were, but from the perspective of God himself. Where he says, for God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Why are you a Christian? Why are you not blind anymore? Well, this is why. For God. For God has done it. He has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of glory, of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. What he's focusing on is what's happening behind the scenes. And not the way that you see it, or not the way that you trace the narrative. Although that has its own importance. But what God is doing to save.

[49 : 54] And what he's focusing on isn't our strength to save ourselves, but the strength of God to save us. The fact that it is not by might, not by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord. What he focuses on is the fact that when we were yet without strength, that in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

He focuses on the fact that, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins, to bear the wrath of God in our place. He focuses not on our works, but on the grace of God. Not on what we have earned, because we've earned nothing, but on the free gift of God in giving us salvation in his son. That's what he focuses on. God's work.

That's what we ought to focus on. We never forget the subjective. We never forget the way that the Lord led us in our conversion and the change that came in upon us. But all the glory isn't to the one who made a decision to go to a prayer meeting, or to profess faith, or to pray to the Lord to come into our lives. The glory goes to the one who has worked in us, who has sent his son, who has given his spirit. To him be all the glory. And that's what the apostle is doing here. And that's what we ought to do. That's what we ought to do, to give God all the glory in our salvation.

And he highlights this because only God can open the eyes of the blind. Only God can do it. And that's how blind you were, and how blind I was. And that's how spiritually dead we were. You know, we can't give ourselves spiritual sight. We can't open our own spiritual eyes. We can't give ourselves spiritual life any more than a dead man can resurrect himself from the dead. We cannot take out the heart of stone and put in a heart of flesh. We can't do that. It needs supernatural power, friends, to make a Christian. It needed supernatural power in your life to loosen Satan's grip upon you, and to loosen your grip upon this world. It needed the power of God himself. Nothing else could do it. You know, you may be not a Christian here tonight, and I could gather a hundred Christians, and we could sit you around, and we could talk to you one by one, and try to persuade you into Christ. Well, we can't do it. We don't have the power. The flesh, as it were, profits nothing. We can't make Christians. Paul cannot plant. Apollos can water.

But it is God alone that gives the increase. And the reference here is actually to the creation. For God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts. The reference is to one of the most famous sentences, not only in all of Scripture, but in all of the English language, where in Genesis 1, and as it's verse 3, God speaks, and he says, let there be light. And there was light.

[53 : 06] Now, before there was light in this creation, we read that the creation, it was without form, and it was void. It was in chaos and in confusion. It hadn't been put together. And that would, the first part of that process was light coming into it. But what the apostle is saying here is, that's what we're like. Spiritually speaking, without form and void or empty. Spiritually in darkness, without light, in chaos and confusion, there is emptiness, there is ignorance, there is unbelief. And what he's saying is that it required the creative power of God to open your eyes.

The creative power of God. You know, friends, we're blessed with a wonderful day, and we could see something of that creative power. I could see it as I drove from Lough's to Stornoway, as I could view the hills and all of their splendor, the Lough's, the Heather. As you drove into Stornoway, you see something of the castle grounds. As you look unto the sky, see something of the beauty, the glory of the midday sun. And you think to yourself, what power, what wisdom on the part of God, the glory of the sky, the ■ voyque, the ■ That kind of power.

It was the God who called the light to shine out of darkness. He was the God who shone his light into the darkness of your heart. It is the creator that gives light. It is the creator that gives life. Light that breaks through the darkness of your unbelief. That shatters the resistance of your unbelief. You know, many of us knew what it was to resist Christ.

Many of us knew what it was to put him off and to say, not now. And yet, if you're Christians today, it is because the Lord in his power, by his spirit, shattered that resistance.

[55 : 25] And he made you to be a new creation. As the apostle says elsewhere, he called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light. The light of his knowledge, of his truth.

The light of his grace and of his peace. The light of his son. We mentioned earlier, the apostle says, you were once darkness. But what are you now?

You're not only in the light, but you are light in the Lord. That is what you are. And you know, friend, you're here and perhaps you're still not a Christian. And maybe you're praying to be a Christian. Maybe you want to be a Christian. And the message that you're hearing here is that it is utterly impossible in and of ourselves to do it. Although we will be held responsible for every one of our actions and for our inaction.

But what I want to encourage you with is this. That okay, maybe you can't do it. But the Lord can do it. The Lord is in the business of doing it. He is the God who created the heavens and the earth.

[56 : 27] He is God, the God who fearfully and wonderfully made you. He is the God who has converted men and women, boys and girls round about you. And he is the God who can convert you.

Yes, impossible with man. But it is possible with God. And he calls you to come on your knees and to plead with him and to pray with him and to say, Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief.

Lord, I can do nothing in and of myself. I look within and I see nothing but darkness. But take me into the light. Work faith in my heart.

Bring me into your kingdom. That I might know and be united to the Lord Jesus Christ. Friend, he can do it. And how does he do it?

And this is the final thing. We read in verse 6, He gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. How? In the face of Jesus Christ.

[57 : 24] He gives light. He shows you his glory. And gives you his blessing through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Where do we see the glory of God? Well, we've mentioned that the heavens declare God's glory.

And the skies, they proclaim and they preach his handiwork. And you see the glory of God in creation. But nowhere do you see it as plainly, as clearly, as glorious as it is in Jesus Christ himself. Who the writer to the Hebrews calls the brightness of God's glory. And the express image of his person. Yes, you can see the glory of God in creation.

But if you want to see it in all of its brightness. Then look into the face of Jesus Christ. I was reading recently the late Douglas MacMillan's book, Wrestling with God.

And he mentioned in that book that when he was a student in the Free Church College. And he was sitting under the teaching of Professor R.A. Finlayson. That Professor Finlayson said to them one day.

[58 : 30] When he was teaching on the incarnation. He said, gentlemen, let us never forget that when the Son of God veiled his glory in his human nature.

He veiled it not in order to conceal his deity. But in order to reveal his deity. In other words, when God became man.

When God was made manifest in the flesh. Yes, he had to veil his glory. And yet, nowhere do we see the deity of God so clear.

Nowhere do we see the Godness of God. What he is like. What his characteristics are. Nowhere do we see it as clearly as we see it in Jesus Christ. That's why the Son of God comes into the world. To show us God. To reveal God to us. You remember what he said. He that has seen me has seen the Father. Because he is the brightness of the Father's glory.

[59 : 32] And what God does is this. He opens your eyes to see what? To see his glory. And to receive his blessing in the face of Jesus Christ.

In his face. You know there's something in that as well, isn't there? In the very face of Jesus Christ. That face which mourned over sin in this life.

That face which shed tears at the grave of Lazarus. The face of he who was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The face of him who was despised and rejected of men.

The face of him who came unto his own and his own received him not. The face which knew the agony of the garden of Gethsemane. That bloodied and bruised face on Calvary.

That face that was so marred that it was beyond resemblance. That face which loved his own and even loved them to the end.

[60 : 35] That face which called out in the midst of the agony of the cross. Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. The loving face. The gracious face.

The forgiving face of Christ. That is where we see the glory of God. That is where we receive the blessing of God. You remember what John said at the start of his gospel.

He said, Let me ask you friend, Have you beheld the glory of Jesus Christ?

Have your eyes been opened? Has your heart been softened? In order to look into the face of Jesus. And to find their salvation full and free.

Has he lit an unquenchable flame in your heart? That heart which was once in darkness. Will if he has, see that you praise God. That you render to him all thanks.

[61 : 40] And all worship for what he has done for you. Or are you still here tonight and you are still in darkness. And these things are still hidden from you. And your heart is still veiled to these things.

Oh friend, consider these things. Consider Christ. Consider eternity. Consider life and consider death. Make your calling and your election sure.

Seek the Lord while you may be found. And call upon him while he is near. Make sure friend that you don't leave this church tonight in darkness.

But that you leave it as we are reading together. The Lord having shone in your heart. To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

In the face of Christ Jesus. Amen. Let us pray. Gracious and ever-blessed God.

[62 : 41] We give thanks that we come to one. Who is in the business of. Taking. Sinners and. Making them into saints.

And. Quickening those who are dead in trespasses and sins. As we all are by nature. And. But God. Who has loved his people with an everlasting love.

Is the one who draws them to himself with loving kindness. And Lord we give thanks and praise for these things. Bless thy truth to us. And forgive us for our sin. For Christ's sake. Amen.

Well let us conclude our worship. We sing to God's praise. From Psalm 18. On page. 221.

And verse 28. From verse 28. The Lord will light my candle so. That it shall shine full bright. The Lord my God will also make my darkness.

[63 : 52] To be light. By thee through troops of men I break. And them discomfit all. And by my God assisting me I overleap a wall. As for God perfect is his way.

The Lord his word is tried. He is a buckler to all those who do in him confide. Who but the Lord is God. But he who is a rock and stay. Tis God that girdeth me with strength.

And perfect makes my way. These verses. Verses 28 to 32. Of Psalm 18. To God's praise. The Lord will light my candle so. That it shall shine full bright.

The Lord will light my candle so.

The Lord my God will light my candle so.

[64 : 50] The Lord my God will also make my darkness to the eye.

By thee through truths of men I pray, and then this comfort all.

And by my heart, does this in thee, I over thee alone.

As for the death that gives his way, the Lord his word is tried.

He is a honor to all those who do in him confide.

[66 : 11] Who found the Lord his property, who is a broken stake.

Tis God that girdeth me with strength, and perfect makes my way.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. Amen.