

Darkness And Light

Ephesians 5:6-14

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. 13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14 for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (Ephesians 5:6-14 (ESV))

May we begin our study of these words with what may seem to be some overly simplistic analogies, especially for those who have been believers in Christ for a long while? But I believe that we need to begin here because that is where the Holy Spirit has taken us with these contrasting words of "darkness" and "light".

The analogy is this . . . that there really is a special kind of "darkness" that exists all throughout our world, a strange, inexplicable kind of darkness, a darkness that the ordinary mind cannot even begin to comprehend.

And the darkness is pervasive, covering over, enshrouding all that exists upon the earth. And unlike the nighttime darkness that we are accustomed to, this special darkness has a personality all its own, a nature that seeks to reach into, and to invade and to dominate and to control everything that takes place within every heart and every soul that resides within that darkness, the things people think, the things they say and the things they do. And that nature is evil, so very evil, evil beyond measure, insidious, demanding and controlling.

But again strangely, though this darkness is so massive and has such dominance and control, its presence seems to go unnoticed by its residents, utterly imperceptible to their ordinary senses.

My thoughts go to the animals that are described as being "nocturnal". Their eyes are so especially suited to seeing within the darkness that they can actually see far better in the darkness than they can in the light. Darkness is their "normal". It's said also that the light actually "hurts" their eyes and because of that, they only come out after darkness falls.

And perhaps the same kind of explanation can be given regarding ordinary people as we live and move and have our being within this “special kind of darkness” that we are speaking about here today. And perhaps it can also be said of our own eyes, that we have become so accustomed to this special “darkness” that the “light” hurts our eyes, and so we try to stay away from it.

In simple terms, the “strange darkness” of this world has become our “normal”, and because it is our “normal”, we don’t even realize that it is here, permeating everything that exists. And sadly . . . most all of the people of this world will live their whole lives and then die never knowing that their entire existence has been lived within a sea of darkness.

But how and why can all this be so? From these scriptures, we know that the change took place almost immediately after man first took his place in this world. In the very beginning, there was “light”, perfect “light”, nothing but light, and all things existed within that “light”. There was no “darkness” at all except for the nighttime darkness, and that darkness was only for a few hours each day, after which light would faithfully return to dispel even that darkness.

But then the “master of darkness”, satan, came along with his beguiling ways, and man chose to follow after him into his darkness and to become what these scriptures call “sons of disobedience”. And it was with that disobedience that darkness then descended upon the earth and upon men, and everything changed. Light was no longer present among men and darkness began to prevail!

And as darkness descended and took control over the minds of men, they began to devise many of their own explanations for their condition and for the conditions around them; and in particular, mankind chose the pathway of intellect and human logic for all their understanding, to see everything within the world as being “natural”, and only “natural”. And over time, most all the peoples of this world would gradually come to accept and to “buy into” that belief, that all things are “natural” and that there is no other existence and no other explanation outside of the “natural” and visible realms of nature. And because of that acceptance and that belief, satan and his demonic world have found a hiding place for themselves within the darkness.

And conveniently for men, that sort of thinking is a comfortable concept. Simply believing that all things exist within the “natural realm”, within the realms of what we can see, hear, feel, smell and taste, with nothing existing outside of those senses, life becomes relatively simple. With that kind of concept to govern our lives and our

behaviors, we are free to do most anything we wish, anything that “strikes our fancy” having only the temporary consequences of our behaviors to be concerned about. And God is so right when He tells us that “men love darkness”! Listen!

19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (John 3:19-20 (NASB))

My memories take me back to one of the first apartments that my wife and I lived in. It was not a very good place to live, but I was living there when we first got married and it was all that I could afford at the time.

The apartment owners did not provide pest control and I didn't do a good job of getting rid of all the many pesky critters that live within the recesses of the walls and cabinets. And we had real problems with those critters. As we would first enter the dimness of the unlit kitchen at night, all things would, at first, appear fine. But immediately upon turning on the overhead light, a whole world of roaches and other insects would suddenly be revealed and begin scurrying around, and I do mean a “whole world” of them, so much so that my sweet wife could not bear the sight.

Unfortunately, I had lived in that apartment for a long while and had become accustomed to the presence of all those vile creatures. And yes, those little vermin probably did run around on our plates and silverware at night, but I had somehow been able to block all of that out of my mind. And I had learned how to “co-exist” with all of those undesirable creatures no matter how bad they were.

But that all ceased, once my sweet wife moved in. She brought a special kind of “light” into my life and into the way I accepted the presence of those undesirable creatures. Folks, it is an awful thing to remember, but I really had become accustomed to the presence of those creatures and that lifestyle. And I had very foolishly accepted it all as being “just a part of life”.

And is this analogy not eerily similar to the “under-belly” life that is taking place all throughout this world every day as the “darkness” spoken about in these scriptures so cleverly covers over it.

The song, “From a Distance” wrongly pictures God in His high and lofty position, seeing all of the goings on of the world taking place, but from a distance. And from that height, all that can be seen is people scurrying around on the earth, doing their daily things of life. And at that height, everything looks as if it is in harmony. But it isn't!

There has only to be a glimmer of light to be put upon all those people and a closer look to be taken and we quickly find that things are not going well at all and life down here is not at all in harmony. In many ways, it is no better than that scene in my kitchen. Once a light is turned on, the real truth begins to emerge and we find that vileness and corruption and sorrow and pain run rampant.

But again, and sadly so, those who are scurrying around, trying their best to meet their daily needs of life, don't even realize that anything is wrong. Life is simply what it is and it is the only life they know.

And it doesn't really matter if our analogy is taken from the view of the drug-ridden streets or from the fancy brownstone apartments where doctors and lawyers live, the darkness remains the same and the "deeds of darkness" remain the same.

And just as with me in my unsanitary apartment, I really did not know just how wrong I was being as I allowed that condition to continue to exist. The darkness had taken control of my mind and I had become satisfied with its conditions. Thankfully, my new wife brought her special "light" into my life and I knew that those old ways that I once thought were OK, and "normal", would need to change. And they did!

May I carry our analogy a step further, and I hope to spend even more time with this portion of the analogy perhaps next week. It has to do with those "vile creatures" that live within the "darkness". Just as with those loathsome, despicable little creatures that lived and moved and had their whole existence cleverly hidden within the cloak of darkness in my kitchen, so also is there a whole world of vile and loathsome creatures that live and move and have their being within this special "darkness" that we have be talking about here today. It is that special world and realm of demons. They are described for us in Ephesians 6. Listen!

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:10-12 (NASB))

While yes, most all of the forces of evil that we encounter each day are embodied within the corrupt flesh and behavior of ordinary men and women, the darkness spoken about here veils the fact that those corrupt people are being influenced and controlled by spiritual forces (demons) within realms that we are unable to see with our naked eye. Verse 12 again . . .

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Just as Jesus was able to look into the face of His dear friend Peter and see the actual face of satan, so also is the same kind of thing taking place with so many of the troublesome people we encounter each day. But we also must remember that just as with Peter, they may even be well-meaning and loving and caring people, but they may be nonetheless powerfully influenced and controlled by the demons that are hidden from our eyes by that “present darkness”.

In the ESV translation of these scriptures, it is translated “this present darkness”. And I agree with that translation, because those words are so appropriate. And those same words are used in the title of one of my favorite books on this subject. It is a book by Frank Peretti with that name, “This Present Darkness”, and I recommend it to you. The book is a fiction novel, but it is based solidly upon the truths of these scriptures regarding the activities of the demonic world, with all their many interactions and influences with the people of this earth.

And just like those vile vermin that lived within the walls and the cabinets of my kitchen, so also do these vile vermin live and move and have their being within the hearts and minds of men and women just like you and me as they reside within the darkness. And unfortunately, just as with me and my acceptance of those kitchen vermin as being “normal”, most of the people of this world have accepted the presence of those demonic vermin as being “their normal”.

Do those people willingly choose to have the presence of these demonic creatures be the “normal” of their lives? Probably not many of them! But folks, if we live outside of the Spirit of God, then we are simply and completely vulnerable to all those creatures of the dark world. And they surely will come in and take possession of much of who we are and what we do. And we won’t even know anything has taken place. The darkness cleverly hides it all.

My time is running short for today, and I don’t like to leave us thinking about such dire conditions as these, but I believe that we need to stop here and pick back up next week. May I leave us with the simple encouragement that God really does have a good and right remedy for this dilemma of darkness that enshrouds our world, it is an “armor”, “His armor” and we will talk more about that next week.

Listen as we close . . .

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