

Shine – Defeating the Darkness

8/22/21

Various Scriptures

Sunday AM

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do w/ the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible – and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Ephesians 5:8-14

W/out question – we live in a dark/sinful world. At times, the darkness around us can seem overwhelming. Just this week, we’ve witnessed the horror/depravity of what sinful people are capable of doing in what has/is taking place in Afghanistan. The loss of life, and the terrifying means by which it’s being carried out, is beyond heart-breaking. And yet, it’s no less sad what is occurring inside our borders w/ the seemingly total disregard for law/life. All of this is a testimony to the sinful/dark world we live in.

W/out going too deep into the weeds – the origin of sin occurred before the creation in the fall of Lucifer (or Satan) – the light-bearing, anointed cherub of God – a created being called to reflect the glory of God. (see **Ezekiel 28:12-17**)

*You had everything going for you. You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom/perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, God's garden. Dressed in splendor – your robe studded w/ jewels: carnelian, peridot, beryl moonstone, onyx, jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald, all in settings of engraved gold. A robe was prepared for you the day you were created. **You were the anointed guardian cherub.** I placed you on the mount of God. You strolled in magnificence among the stones of fire. From the day of your creation you were sheer perfection, and then imperfection/evil were detected in you. In much buying/selling you turned violent, you sinned! I threw you, disgraced, off the mount of God. I threw you out – you, the anointed angel-cherub. No more strolling among the gems of fire for you! Your beauty went to your head. You corrupted wisdom by using it to get worldly fame. I threw you to the ground, sent you sprawling before an audience of kings to let them gloat over your demise...*

Oddly enough, Lucifer’s job was to reflect the light of God’s majesty/glory to the angelic realm and then return their worship to God – that is, **until he wanted it for himself**. And this act led to his rebellion and leading a portion of the angelic order into darkness.

But that wasn’t the end. His dark rebellion soon found its way into the Garden of Eden where he’d give an unsuspecting Adam/Eve *an offer too good to be true* – plunging all of mankind and the creation into darkness – and separating us from God.

Of course, **God would intervene.** And in Eden, God made a sacrifice to cover the shame/stain of Adam and Eve’s sin. He began weaving a scarlet thread of grace that culminated at an old rugged cross where God Himself laid down His life to rescue His creation from darkness. I’m reminded of the words of the Isaiah:

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness – a light has dawned. Isaiah 9:2

In Jesus, (as God in the flesh) the Light of God entered time/space to expose the darkness w/in and around us by making a once-for-all, satisfactory, atoning sacrifice to reconcile the creation back to Himself.

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our

Savior appeared, he saved us, not b/c of righteous things we had done, but b/c of his mercy. He saved us thru the washing of rebirth and renewal by the H.S., whom he poured out on us generously thru Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.
Titus 3:3-7

At the cross, God made it possible for us to know Him and to *walk in the light*. Yet until He returns, we will have to do so while still living in a dark/sinful world.

Question – How do we live to defeat the darkness?

Daily, like Adam/Eve, we're going to be **tempted** by the demonic and by the trapping of this world. Our sin-loving flesh enjoys nothing more than pleasing and caring for itself. James explains this well...

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.
James 1:13-14

when (*hotan*) not *if* – as in maybe; but when – as in it is guaranteed to occur. ***Temptation is coming.***

Notice the process. Satan/demonic offer the bait – our flesh craves it – and then we choose to take or resist it.

Thankfully, b/c of God's grace and the deposit of the H.S. w/in us at salvation – we don't have to take the bait – we can resist it by humbly submitting to God.

If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to man. God is faithful; He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will provide a way out so you can endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

In the time we have remaining, I want to offer you (4) essential spiritual blessings God has given to us to assist us in dispelling/defeating the darkness w/in and around us. To start, look at **Philippians 2:12-16**:

*Continue to **work out** your salvation w/fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act to fulfill his good purpose. Do everything w/out grumbling or arguing, that you may become blameless/pure, "children of God w/out fault in a warped/crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the Word of life.* Philippians 2:12-16

While this can be a confusing text – in actuality, it's an amazing passage differentiating God's provision from our responsibility in salvation.

work out – this is not a call to perform some task to earn salvation – nor is it to imply that God has done His part, and now we must do our part – or that we're to **let go/let God** – as in we have no faith culpability.

To *work out your salvation* means we're to work out (or live out) what God has placed in us. **IOW** – We're to actively respond to Jesus in us by living responsibly under the influence of the H.S. so Jesus lives thru us.

The Christian life is NOT a series of ups/downs, but ins/outs. Meaning, we are to live out (or work out) what the H.S. has done and is doing w/in us.

I believe God has given us (4) primary means to assist us in **working out** what He is working in us to assist us in dispelling/defeating the darkness. If we want to thrive w/ God, walk in the light, and defeat the darkness w/in and around us, then we'll need to get dig into Scripture, fall on our knees in prayer, lift up holy hands in worship, and unite w/ other believers.

I The Necessity of **SCRIPTURE**

By your Word, I can see where I'm going; it throws a beam of light on my dark path. Psalm 119:105

IOW – God's Word is like hitting the high-beams while driving on a dark road – the light exposes everything before/beside you.

Truth is there is so much incredible Scripture to guide and empower us to walk in the Light. The Psalmist begs us *to meditate on the Word day/night* – and **if we will**, *we will be like a tree by a stream of water which bears fruit in due season whose leaf will not wither.*

The psalmist also said that *if we will hide God's Word in our heart, we will not sin against God.*

It reminds me of the Christian teenagers who placed a Bible on the car-seat b/w themselves whenever they went on a date. They knew that if they were going to be tempted, they'd have to climb over Matthew, Mark, Luke, John to do anything about it.

When we're in Scripture, we have an ability to see sin/temptation farther away from us – giving us more time to respond/resist the temptation coming.

The other day, I was driving home late at night w/ my low beams on; while I could see the road fine, I had difficulty seeing what was on the shoulders. As I was passing an area where deer often graze, I decided to hit my high beams. Suddenly, I could see (4) deer running towards the road in front of me. If I hadn't turned on my high beams, I probably would've hit one of them, but b/c I saw them from a longer distance away, I could adjust when they passed in front of me.

When we're in God's Word on a regular basis – **and God's Word is getting into us**, it's amazing how the H.S. will help us to see temptation a long way off so that we can adjust and resist taking the bait.

II The Power of **PRAYER**

A 2nd powerful tool in our spiritual toolbox to help us to defeat the darkness is **prayer**. Prayer brings a God-awareness into the equation of our everyday lives requiring us to trust in His ability rather than in ourselves as we engage in spiritual warfare.

For our struggle is not against flesh/blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12
So, how do we engage spiritual darkness? In **6:17-18**, Paul says we must use **Scripture/prayer**. Why?

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight w/ are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 2 Cr. 10:3-4

Why is prayer so essential? Prayer is what activates the rest of our spiritual armor to bring us into alignment and under God's rule. ***It is the mechanism that plugs us into the power of God.***

III The Authority of **WORSHIP**

A 3rd element to defeat the darkness is worship. *Worship is getting God in His right position on the throne of your life and then loving Him w/ all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength.*

Unfortunately, today, many people think of worship as singing songs; but it's so much more. Still, as we see in the Psalms, worship can involve music. And for me, I can't tell you how many times a song of worship on my *lips* has protected me from a *slip*.

The classic story of the power of worship occurred in Acts 16. Paul/Silas were thrown in jail for sharing the Gospel; but instead of becoming discouraged, they worshiped – and all heaven broke loose.

About midnight Paul/Silas were praying/singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once, all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself b/c he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Acts 16:25-31

Talk about WOW! Worship has a way of dispelling the darkness and lift our souls out of the struggles of life into dependence on God by reminding us of whose we are and who God has promised to be.

The Final element to help us to defeat the darkness is genuine fellowship w/ one another in community.

IV The Blessing of **CHURCH**

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love/good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

Can I tell you that the REAL value of church is NOT the worship service or the sermon (as good/helpful as they may be). The value of church should be the genuine, God-inspiring, relationships, encouragement, and accountability you experience and engage in w/ other believers that edifies your life. **Listen** – if you're just coming to the building but not really engaging in community that spurs you along towards loving others and serving God, then you've missed the point.

In closing, defeating the darkness is not easy task. In fact, in and of ourselves, we will lose every time. But when we live in the power of God under the influence of the H.S. working out God's Word in prayer as we seek to honor God and walk in fellowship w/ others – we are employing the very tools God has given to help us to *walk in the Light as He is in the light*.

The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber b/c our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Rm. 13:11-12