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Pitch Black Terror

Is Darkness Merely the Absence of Light?

“For with you is the fountain of life, in your light we see light.”
Psalms 36:9

Visitors

Riverside Public Utilities



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Is that really me on the far left?

Tons of coal and rock crackled overhead. We trekked deeper into the mine. Only a small lamp on our hardhats stood between us and utter darkness. I knew our tour group was not in danger but the path felt treacherous. Musty odors emanated from the sulfur creek trickling beneath our feet. There was no sunlight in any direction.

Before our small band began the tour that day, we were given instructions of what to do if separated or trapped. “Not likely,” we were told, “. . . but government regulation requires the disclosures.”

It took only moments to wind our way out of the warmth and brilliance of daylight into stale blackness. A feeling of aloneness swept over me despite being only inches away from others.

Hysterical screams erupted in the blackness of the cave, as one member of our tour pleaded for light. In those few moments before we were instructed to turn on our miner’s lights, we experienced desperation, isolation, and pitch-black terror.

Within seconds of seeing light, calmness spilled over the group. Even the terrified member sighed in relief with our flickering shadows on the cave walls.

That day I experienced the impact of darkness on the human condition. I saw firsthand how the presence of light redeemed the soul and changed terror into peace and calmness.

Darkness and light are two prominent themes in the Bible. They are at the center of the history of the universe beginning with the second verse of the Bible. “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness,” Genesis 1:2-4. The dramatic

close of the Word of God culminates with a discussion of light in Revelation 21:23-24. In between, there are over forty passages, highlighting the duality of these concepts.

Is darkness merely the absence of light? Is one good and one evil? What do we need to know about light and darkness as Christians? Why are these concepts important to us?

My awareness of the Biblical use of light and darkness began several years ago, working for a difficult boss. Months after relocating my newly-blended family, my boss ordered me to do something I considered unethical and mean-spirited. His demands were accompanied by the threat of termination.

My husband and I spent many hours in prayer about how to handle the situation, knowing that I could not do what my boss demanded. Our financial security was at stake with the purchase of a new home and three young children to care for.

In despair, scripture reading led me to Ephesians 5:8-13, a passage entitled, "Walk in Light." "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 with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible."

Our prayers no longer pleaded for deliverance from the evil boss. Instead, we prayed for strength in exposing darkness to the light. I realized God had placed me there to expose the unfruitful works of darkness.

I stood firm with my refusal to commit the demanded action. A member of the governing board heard about the CEO's demand and interceded on my behalf. Although I had told no one in the organization about my plight, it was known. I was given time to seek other employment without giving in to the unethical demand. Weeks later, I was offered a new job with a raise and promotion. The situation culminated with the removal of the boss from the organization only a few months after I left.

While that experience was unsettling and difficult, I grappled with the reality that regardless of my job title my work as a Christian is to expose darkness to the light.

What does the Bible say about light and darkness? In Isaiah 45:7, light is equated with peace and darkness with calamity. Rarely does any passage mention darkness without light.

Darkness Defined

A definition of darkness emerges in Genesis 1:2 and Jeremiah 4:23 with reference to a description of earth before God's creation. The earth is described as void, without form, in darkness. Isaiah 8:22 speaks of darkness as "doom of anguish." Jeremiah 13:16 talks about darkness as the "shadow of death." In Matthew 22:13 darkness is described as "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The state of darkness erupts in times of turmoil, trouble, or terror throughout the Bible. In Exodus 20, God directs Moses to dispense the ninth plague upon Egypt by stretching his hand towards heaven so darkness would come for three days. Darkness consumed the land at the crucifixion of Jesus. Finally, death for sinners foretells an eternal darkness and separation from God.

Light Defined

Synonyms for light include goodness, righteousness, blameless, perfection of beauty, without fault, and truth. The condition of light is expressed beautifully in Hebrews 1:3 (NKJV) as "brightness of His Glory." The most compelling definition is John 8:12 with the declaration of

Jesus, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Why is the meaning of darkness and light so important to us as Christians?

John 3:19-21 tells us that the world was overcome with darkness because we are sinners and prefer deeds of evil. Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV) explains that we wrestle with "spiritual hosts of wickedness" and are engaged in a battle against principalities. Our natural state is sinful and evil. Without Christ, we live in darkness.

While darkness is terrifying, there is hope. Colossians 1:13-14 says, "For he has rescued us from the domination of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Once we know Christ, we are sons of light and sons of the day, according to I Thessalonians 5:5, ". . . we do not belong to the night or to the darkness."

The challenge is ever present in today's world. According to Romans 13:12, we must put on the armor of light. Our task is to switch on the minor's light. By doing this, we conquer darkness and dispel evil. Through the armor of light, we bring hope to an embattled world.

In my experience with the caustic employer, I learned that the armor of light is the armor of God. Waking each day, I dressed in the full armor of Ephesians 5:10-16. I knew God would protect my family and me. There was much more at stake than a paycheck, it was a battle against evil. I knew my job was to expose darkness to light.

God promises He will illuminate our path and protect us from evil. May we be His light in the workplace, at home, and all corners of the earth.