

“A Light in the Darkness”—Isaiah 9:1-2

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “A Light in the Darkness”, is Isaiah 9:1-2 → *But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time He has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

What does darkness feel like to you? This may seem like a strange question because, from a physical perspective, darkness doesn’t “feel like” anything. It’s just darkness. In fact, darkness is a difficult concept for most people to understand since we are usually surrounded by some kind of light, if not artificial then the natural light of the sun, moon and stars.

Yet, Scripture speaks of a darkness which can actually be felt. Yahweh sent a plague upon the Egyptians before delivering His people from their grasp in slavery with darkness, described as *a darkness **to be felt***. It was so *pitch dark* that for three days no one *in all the land of Egypt* could do anything!

(cf. Exodus 21-23) Why?

“Pitch darkness” is so dark that your eyes are not able to adjust enough to make out any forms or textures around you. Thus you are disabled from moving freely. It can produce strong fears and anxieties over not knowing where you’re going, over the danger of being harmed by something or someone you cannot see and even wondering if you will ever get out of it and see the light again. It goes beyond the feeling of being lost to a feeling of complete disability, hopelessness and despair. In fact, there is no chance for lasting life in continuing *deep darkness*.

In our text Yahweh spoke His words of promise to people living in *gloom* and *anguish* as they were walking *in darkness* and lived *in a land of **deep darkness***. The *darkness* spoken about here refers to a couple of situations, each related to the other.

The land of Zebulun and . . . Naphtali, which constituted the northern boarder of Israel, had been exposed to and influenced by the Gentiles who did not worship Yahweh but lived in idolatry. The LORD had warned His people about to enter this land 700 years earlier against falling into such a temptation in Exodus 34:11-14 → *Behold, I will drive out before you these Gentile nations. Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. You shall tear down*

their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God).

These Gentiles became a snare in their midst, leading them into the “darkness” (i.e. away from pure devotion to Yahweh). Because of the wrong choices which God’s people continued to make, their land became *a land of deep darkness* in their sin.

Thus, Scripture pictures sinfulness, life separated from a relationship with the LORD and the dominion of satan as deep darkness. In fact, Ephesians 2:1-2 speaks about how we *were dead in the trespasses and sins* as we followed *the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience*. Such spiritual blindness in the midst of spiritual darkness is also pictured as “groping around in the darkness,” totally lost in finding any way to the LORD. (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 4:17-19;) This prophecy in our text was spoken to God’s people who were feeling *darkness . . . anguish and gloom* as a result of their sin.

The darkness of sin is truly felt in many ways. Guilt over sin can haunt you your whole life and affect virtually every decision you make. Resentments over sin placed upon you in victimization can breed sin in many forms throughout your life without even being aware it is happening. This darkness in sin is felt in virtually every relationship in your life. Its depth reaches its “height” when

living in it becomes so “normal” that only a miracle can bring you out of it! You need a light so bright that it not only reveals this pitiable situation but overcomes it to lift you out of its grasp!

This is the promise of verse 2 of our text: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.* This prophecy is a word of hope in the midst of such darkness—that the LORD will send His *great light* into the lives of people so they can experience His recreating power! While the context is speaking specifically about Israel, its fulfillment extends to **all people!**

Notice the prophecy goes on to describe this *great light*: *For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* (cf. Isaiah 9:6) Yahweh had even given King Ahaz a foretaste of this promise in Isaiah 7:14 → *The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.* *Immanuel* means “God with us.” This *great light* would be revealed in the incarnation where God took on our human flesh to deal with the *deep darkness* of sin once and for all and give new life to all people who believe in Him! **It is the promise of Jesus Christ!**

The Gospel of Matthew says this promise was fulfilled when Jesus made a residence move: *Leaving Nazareth Jesus went and lived in Capernaum by*

the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled. (cf. Matthew 4:13-16) John 1:4-5 harkens back to this prophecy when it says that in Jesus *was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* Since Jesus is the sinless Son of God the *deep darkness* of sin could not *overcome* Him even though He suffered all the pain and punishment of that darkness in sin **for you**. Thus this prophecy says: *The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this—and He has!* (cf. Isaiah 9:7)

You do not need to live in the darkness of sin, enslaved to immorality, burdened by guilt and running away from rather than turning to the LORD. You have this *great light* shone on you daily in the Person & Work of Jesus! He said in John 8:12 → *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.* As you follow Him by repenting of your sins and trusting in Him you come into the light of God's grace and love for you! Your life changes from walking **in** the darkness of sin to walking **in the midst of** the darkness of sin, knowing Whom you are following—Jesus Who is Lord over all! Following Him is the place where your feelings of *deep darkness* are absorbed by the light of His love; your feelings of guilt are lifted by the light of His forgiveness; your feelings of hopelessness are lost in the light of His hope eternally. **You have the light in Jesus to give proper**

perspective to your life today and eternally!

The Holy Spirit makes you a beacon of God's grace in Jesus Christ in the midst of the darkness of sin as you carry out the various vocations of your life in the relationships you encounter each day. The miracle is that it is still the LORD's doing! It has to be His doing because there are times when you feel rather hopeless, helpless and heavy in spiritual battles. Yet, it is amazing how the Holy Spirit will work through you even at those times to bring the light of Jesus' love and grace into the lives of others! Paul put it this way in 2 Corinthians 4:7 → *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. Cracked, chipped, broken and glued together, you are still used by the Holy Spirit to bring the treasure of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a light in peoples' darkness each day. Amen.*

At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

(Ephesians 5:8-10)

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