

Ephesians 15-04-05b

Let's pick up our study now. We're thinking about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, in particular with emphasis on the light and darkness motif. There are so many different elements that we could dwell on, but this is part of our study both here in Ephesians and in the Old Testament.

We've recently looked at the books of Hosea and Jonah and Amos, and we're currently looking at Micah. And in Amos, you may remember that in chapter 5, verse 18, "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord." Wow, that's a sobering thought. Aren't we all supposed to look forward to the return of the Lord and His judgment on evil and His deliverance into the kingdoms which are to come and the gathering of His people to Himself? Why would the prophet say, "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord, for what good is the day of the Lord to you? It will be darkness and not light." Oh, that's why.

How could the day of the Lord be darkness to us and not light? Well, men love darkness rather than light when their deeds are evil. All things are exposed by the light. And in the day of judgment, we will be judged according to our deeds.

There is judgment at the judgment seat. That's why it's called a bema. It's not a reward seat.

It's not a happy Christmas morning gift seat. It is a judgment seat. And most of what will take place there, I assure you from the Word of God, most of what is going to happen at the judgment seat of Christ is going to be addressing darkness rather than light.

It is going to be the loss of reward, loss of inheritance, recognition of apathy, indifference, disobedience, outright rebellion, and consignment to low and shadowed places in the kingdom for most of us. How do I know this? Need I refer again to, wide is the gate and broad is the way? Many there be which go in thereat. Narrow is the way and straight is the gate.

I just corrected that in a transcript this last week. People in younger generations really are not exposed to the word straight, S-T-R-A-I-T, and the transcript. And I think many people think when they quote the verse, narrow is the way and straight in terms of not having curves, not having turns, straight is the gate.

There's no G-H in there. It's S-T-R-A-I-T, narrow. It's a small door.

Narrow is the way and straight is the gate that leads to life and few there be that find it. When you're trying to find something, often you go and look for a flashlight, right? I think it must be in the car. Maybe it's between the seats.

Maybe it's underneath. Maybe it fell behind the clothes in the closet. Maybe it's under the couch.

Maybe it's we go and get light so that we can find a thing. If something is clearly visible and

clearly illuminated, we have no difficulty finding it. Narrow is the way, straight is the gate that leads to life and few there be that find it.

So, woe to you who desire the day of the Lord. I don't want this verse to apply to me. I don't want it to apply to you.

It's a shame that it would have to apply to any believers in this age, but it actually does. What good is the day of the Lord to you? That's tragic. You're not going to get much of an improvement in the day of the Lord from what you've got now.

It's not good for you. Then two verses later in Amos 5 20, is not the day of the Lord darkness and not light? Is it not very dark with no brightness in it? I've mentioned before how tragic it is going to be when the Lord himself descends from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. And like the Israelites at Sinai, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are going to be scared, are going to be confused, and are not going to find it to be a glorious day.

Even though they sing it, even though they wave their hands in the air and pray for it, woe to you. Well, we do not need to be in that group. Micah, our current study, we'll get to this.

Micah chapter 7 verse 8, do not rejoice over me, my enemy. Don't you hate it when something bad happens and your people who wish you ill are happy? I hate that. I hate giving them the satisfaction.

Many times we try to hide our troubles because we just don't want to give people the satisfaction of knowing that we've got trouble. Do not rejoice over me, my enemy. When I fall, I will arise.

When I sit in darkness, the Lord a light to me. In the New King James they have that in italics, the Lord will be a light to me. Typically when you lack a verb, there is a present idea.

When I sit in darkness, the Lord is a light to me. The darkness I sit in is of this world. The darkness I sit in is circumstantial, is personal, but the Lord is a light to me even when I sit in darkness.

Those who sit in darkness have seen a great light. Micah chapter 7 verse 8. Well, interestingly, the commission that the Lord Jesus gives to the apostle Paul, we talked about this just recently, as he reviews it in Acts chapter 26. At midday, O king, not in the morning, not in the evening, at midday when the sun is the brightest, Paul is on the road to Damascus.

Bad time to travel. This must have been in the wintertime. If you've ever been in the Middle East, noonday in the summertime, it is hotter than Hades, especially if you're anywhere near Damascus.

He is on the road to Damascus at midday. He's on the road. People typically would pull over, find some shade, find an oasis, rest the camels or the donkeys or whatever it is they were using for

luggage transportation.

They didn't have backpacks and water bladders. They didn't have 15 speed bicycles and things. They had to hoof it and they had animal transportation.

And interestingly, Paul is so literally hot to get to Damascus and persecute the Christians that he is on the road traveling in the heat of midday. That's why he mentions it. I had a commission from the chief priests, Acts 26.12. And verse 13, at midday, O king, along the road, I saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun, the brightest light that you can get in the Middle East midday.

And he sees a light that is brighter than that, brighter than the sun shining around me and those who journeyed with me. It doesn't matter how much light you think you're in. The light of the Lord is going to be brighter than that.

When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying to me in Aramaic, in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads. I said, who are you, Lord? He said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, but rise and stand on your feet. For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness, both of the things which you have seen, that's his wonderful schooling in the Old Testament at the feet of Gamaliel, his incredible grasp and depth of understanding of the Old Testament.

He just hadn't turned that final corner. He hadn't made that last connection that Yeshua from Nazareth was in fact the fulfillment of all of those types and pictures that he so thoroughly understood. I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness, both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.

The mystery doctrines, the church age truths that Jesus uniquely communicated to Paul. There is this giant naysaying philosophical bamboo bridge that people get on and they start saying, well, Christianity ought to be the teachings of Christ. Paul took the teachings of Christ and messed them all up and we don't hold with Paul.

Paul corrupted it and perverted it and turned it to his own purposes and this, that and the other. I mean in the present day people are saying this. If you want genuine Christianity you have to go back to the teaching of Christ.

I don't even know where to start. I don't even know how to answer somebody that is that far afield. The Lord Jesus was in the age of Israel confronting the nation of Israel with their opportunity to embrace their Messiah and enter into their promised kingdom age.

And the teachings of the Lord Jesus were directed into that situation. Not to say that they don't have enormous significance for us, but you have to understand them in their context when He says, turn the other cheek. When He says things about sheep and goats.

When He talks about the time of the end in Matthew 24, you have to understand who He is talking to and when He is talking to them. With the interruption of that program and the introduction of the engrafted branches put into the tree of God's plan and purpose, Israel having been snapped out for unbelief, Romans 9, 10 and 11, Jesus says, there are things I am going to reveal to you, Paul. I will yet reveal to you, verse 17, I will deliver you from the people, the Jewish people, those who are still in the dark, who haven't figured out that God's plan has moved forward in a giant step.

I will deliver you from the people as well as the Gentiles to whom I now send you, the Gentiles. I send you to them to do what? Verse 18, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me, set apart by faith in me. Notice it is not just to get them saved, turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.

That's the power we're talking about in Ephesians 6, right? What if you're not turned? You can be saved and still be in the darkness, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are set apart, sanctified, marked out, unique through their faith in me. Colossians 1, verse 12, Paul says, for this cause, verse 9, since the day we heard it, we do not cease to pray for you and desire that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. The things which you have seen, the things I am going to reveal to you, Paul, communicate those.

Paul prays for the believers to whom he has sent, that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, verse 10 of Colossians 1, that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to His glorious power. Put you in mind of Ephesians 6, strengthened with might according to His glorious power, with a view toward complete patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. Patience and endurance with joyfulness.

Now, it's almost oxymoronic, isn't it? If you're having to be patient and having to endure, something is not good. Being joyful while bearing a burden. Do you ever think about horses and people riding them? I've thought about it a lot, because we just take it for granted.

Well, horses, they're there to be ridden. You put on a saddle, put in a bridle, jump on them and ride them around. You watch the Westerns and here's people just riding hell for leather.

Here's the Pony Express. Here they are, harnessed up to wagons and coaches and just doing all manner of stuff. And we just think of them as that's what they're for.

But in their natural state, wildfire breathes through their mane and they're trotting around the black stallion and the rest of it. They're free. They're unfettered.

They aren't burdened. And I thought, if I was a horse, how happy would I be, especially if I was

kind of a small horse, to be saddled up and have some 230-pound guy climb on me on the middle of my back and then say, run as fast as you can with me on your back, bumpity, bumpity, bump. That 230 pounds turns to 400 or 500 pounds every time the downslope hits.

And I think, how much fun is that for the horse? That's not what he would choose to do, one would think. And yet, if you've been around horses, there are horses who can't wait for somebody to put the saddle on them and go for a ride. They get excited.

Part of that is because they haven't been living a life of freedom. They're in a corral or in a pasture. They don't have much to do.

And this is a new thing. We're going to do something different. I get to go see stuff I'm not currently seeing.

And there are horses who love to be ridden. And even though they are bearing a burden and even though they've got a bit in their mouth and they can't go where they would choose to go, they go where the rider tells them, they love it. It's their favorite thing to go for a ride.

And I was mystified by that in my younger days. But it puts me in mind that when I read this passage, that even as we are enduring affliction or hardship or challenge or just a lot to get done, no one part of it is bad. There's just so much of it you don't think you can get through.

Anybody that's been in school and you say, you know, this paper I'm writing is really interesting. I like this subject. I would love to know more about it.

And I could write this paper so well if I didn't have all my other classes. And don't you realize, Prof, that as you've asked me to complete this 15-page paper, I've also got a midterm in three other classes. I've also got a paper due in two other classes.

I've also got a project and my partners are not helping and it's going slowly. And I've also got stuff at home and my plumbing broke and my car's in the shop and I've got all of these things. And you grieve because I would love to do this paper justice.

I would love to polish it up to a high shine. This thing could be published in a magazine if I could just give it the attention it deserves. And it's a wonderful thing.

And these other things, I like the subjects I'm taking. I'm majoring in this and I like this stuff. But the quantity of it is just more than any two humans ought to have to bear.

And I've got to get it all done yesterday. And I'm up all night, no sleep. I'm cranky.

I'm living on coffee and soda crackers and pork and beans. I'm trying to just get through and get finished onto all patients, Colossians 1:11, complete patients. It says all patients.

This means patients in everything, nothing, even your besetting thing doesn't provoke you to

impatience. All patients and long-suffering with joyfulness. This is tough, but I'm enjoying the heck out of it.

I just, you know, bring it on. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. I'm so privileged to have these opportunities.

There are people who would love to be where I am, bearing the burdens that I'm bearing. There are horses who couldn't wait to have the saddle put on and the bridle and head out on a beautiful day through the woods on a wonderful riding trail. They would eat that alive.

And here I am, dark, brooding, complaining with joyfulness to be able to bear these burdens with joy. Giving thanks, verse 12, this is our passage, giving thanks unto the Father who has made us qualified to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. Isn't that what Jesus commissioned Paul to communicate? An inheritance among those who are set apart by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's an inheritance in the light. Why that added prepositional phrase? Why not just inheritance? Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow, even the shadow of death, it doesn't throw me off stride. I'm not going to get preoccupied with the evil that is creating that shadow.

The power of darkness that we wrestle against doesn't throw me off stride. I have an inheritance in the light. My future is in the light.

Paul says in Thessalonians, we are not of the night or of the darkness that that day should overtake us and rob us. That that day should come and as we stand at the judgment seat, inheritance, into the lake of fire. You sit outside and roast weenies over your inheritance, burning up in the lake of fire.

Outside are those whose part is in the lake of fire. Their meros, their inheritance. My inheritance is not in the lake of fire.

I pray. I strive. I challenge myself day by day, week by week.

Where do you want your inheritance? Do you want it in the darkness which is outside? Do you want it in the lake that burns forever and ever? Or do you want to share the inheritance of the saints in the light, the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, the firstborn who shares his inheritance, the firstborn among many brethren? Romans 8. We have to stop ourselves when we are entangled in the affairs of this life, when we are dragged into subjectivity. My circumstance, my situation, my feelings, my people, my people problems. Light and darkness.

There is an uncountable number of references to light and darkness in Scripture. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and it's no accident that he came by night. The Pharisees are sitting in darkness and when God sends the light, they don't see it.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night and Jesus shines the light of the Word of God into the heart of Nicodemus. And you will remember that Nicodemus on the occasion of the crucifixion reappears. You remember that? He assists in the burial of the Lord Jesus.

Early in the ministry of the Lord, John chapter 3, here is Nicodemus showing up by night at the end of the ministry of the Lord Jesus as night is settling in and Jesus is being entombed in the darkness of the heart of the earth. There is Nicodemus. It is so profound.

It is so intentionally placed in Scripture what darkness means. This is the hour of darkness. This is the power of darkness.

And yet there are those who, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, walk while you have the light. A little while longer I am with you, Jesus says, and then I'm going away. He is away now, but the light of the Lord shines in our hearts through the ministry of God's Holy Spirit.

That is what clarifies our eye. That's what turns our eye to light and fills our whole body with light so that we can fulfill our function as the body of Christ. What did He say about Himself? I am the light of the world.

When He left and commissioned us to take His place in this world, what are we to be? Walk as children of light. So it's helpful just to take our situation and our circumstance and just turn it from that perspective. Think about it with a fresh point of view.

Is what I am doing light or darkness? Am I sponsoring? Am I encouraging in my own life and in the lives of those around me light or darkness? Am I producing heat or am I producing light? They famously say, you know, this discussion is producing more heat than light. Well, we can stop. We're not here to produce heat.

We're here to produce light. Somebody wants to be warmed, tell them go be warmed, be fed. But if they're looking for light, we walk in the light as He is in the light.

We fellowship with Him. The beauty and the glory of the resurrection morning is the sun, S-U-N, of righteousness arising with healing in His wings, rising into a clear blue morning sky. That's our Savior, resurrected, granting that life and light to us, asking us to reflect that life and that light as we negotiate the obstacles and travel the path toward that straight gate that leads to life and inheritance among those who are set apart by trust in the Lord Jesus, an inheritance in the light.

It's our great privilege. It is the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think it would be much more appropriate to have the gift-giving tradition on Resurrection Sunday than on December 25th, because this is the day that counts.

Wonderful thing that the Lord was born, but far more wonderful that we are born again, and because He lives, we live also. When He led captivity captive, when He ascended on high, and

He gave gifts to men, that would be an interesting thing to think about when we give gifts to one another, wouldn't it? Maybe something more than rabbits and eggs. But I think the gifts today are appropriate because they light up.

We've got little Resurrection Day gifts, and they've got an internal light. I thought, well, that's very apropos, unintended, but our subject today is the light, and we celebrate the light. We celebrate the light of the morning of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the life and the light that is His gift to us, and in which we will share when He comes and calls us up into the clear blue sky to dwell with Him forevermore.

And you and I want to be near and not far. We want to be in good range of the Lamb who is the light in the New Jerusalem, and not grinding our teeth in the darkness which is outside. Well, we'll close here in a word of prayer.

When we pick up next time, we're going to do a quick survey of the pieces of armor that are mentioned here, and move to the conclusion of this letter that has meant so much to us in detailing what it means to be in Him. But we'll close here. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for our life, the gift of eternal life that we have in the Lord Jesus. We thank You for Him and for His place at Your side awaiting the command to call us to Himself and to enter into yet another phase of Your plan and purpose. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will give us understanding and appreciation for the light of Your Word, which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, and that as we walk in the light we can reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus, even as He reflects Your glory.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.