



Turning the Tide
O f D a r k n e s s

being salt and light in a fallen world

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INTRODUCTION

When Adam and Eve believed the lies of Satan in the Garden of Eden, they opened the door to his satanic rule on the earth. Their disobedience resulted in the loss of intimacy and fellowship with God, and the loss of their dominion over creation. The curse of sin and death permeated the earth and thrust all of humanity into a dark and sinister world. Although centuries have past since that fateful day, the world still reels from the effects of Satan's rule. Human atrocities, wars, and natural disasters dominate our world.

Is there hope for the future? The answer is yes, however, it is not a temporal hope, but a living hope in Christ. By uniting with Him, the Head of the church, we become a catalyst for change. Change that comes about one heart at a time, transformed by the power of the gospel.

Christ's admonition to "occupy till I come" in Luke 19:13, is a reminder to us that we are to be Christ focused and kingdom minded until He returns.

Light bearers

We live in an age when the very fabric of our society is being threatened by the forces of evil. Regard for Biblical truth is at an all time low. Our country and, indeed, the world is in a downward spiral, embracing a godless morality that has no standard of right and wrong. Relativism has replaced traditional Biblical truth. Destruction of the family, sexual perversion, and a self-indulgent society have all but destroyed our nation. Only the truth of God's Word can bring clarity to the confusion that permeates our culture.

The church, with its message of hope and love, is God's instrument in the world to stem the tide of moral decay. As bearers of the gospel—the good news, we have the opportunity to be salt and light to those who walk in darkness, and we do that best when we are properly equipped.

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1 Peter 3:15, encourages us to "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But to do this with gentleness and respect." Our challenge is to effectively communicate what we believe. Our knowledge and understanding of God's Word will be needed to insure that our response is biblically based. If we know who we are and what we believe, we will be able to walk in wisdom. We will know how to answer each person and give the reason for our hope in the gospel.

Not knowing the revelation of truth found in the Scriptures will make us an easy prey for the enemy who seeks to destroy us. The old saying, "what you don't know won't hurt you," is certainly not true when it comes to Biblical truth. The Bible says, "my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). The

implication is that if we do not know what we believe, we can easily be drawn away from the truth and “taken captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (Colossians 2:8). The consequences of this vain, humanistic thinking can only be dealt with effectively by renewing our minds through God’s Word (Rom 12:2).

A Biblical worldview

Apart from the influence of God’s Word, flawed human reasoning will prevail. However, viewing the world through the lens of a renewed mind enables believers to have moral clarity. It is the grid which influences their thoughts and actions as they engage the world around them. It is also the framework for establishing a worldview which is based on the Bible.

Without a worldview consistent with Biblical principles there is no objective standard for truth. The Bible says, “there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12). However, when truth prevails, darkness is pushed back and the kingdom of God advances.

Silence is not an option

Unfortunately, many Christians have lost their spiritual effectiveness and have been lured into an ungodly lifestyle. Consequently, they have become complacent in a pleasure-seeking, self-indulgent, society.

As the world slides further into spiritual darkness, the blame must be put squarely on the shoulders of the church. When the people of God cease to stand for the truth, wickedness flourishes. “The wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honored among men” (Psalm 12:8). Vileness is honored when the church is silent. The church is silent, for the most part, because it is weak. It is weak because it is not separate from the world and its belief system. Isaiah 59:12-16 sums this up

with following words:

“For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities: rebellion and treachery against the LORD, turning our backs on our God...So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intercede.”

Now is the time for the church to act and “to stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose us” (Philippians 1:27-28).

David asked in Psalm 11:3, “When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?” The word *foundations* used here can be translated as the word *columns*. Used metaphorically, it means princes or nobles. When the columns are overturned, that is, when the defenders of what is right and good have perished, when the foundations of truth, godliness, and righteousness, which make up the fabric of our society, are thrown aside, the question arises, “What can the righteous do?” We cannot yield to the enemy as if there is no hope. We must turn our hearts toward Christ and seek His face. He alone is our strength to prevail in this world of darkness and to stand against the spiritual forces of evil.

Help From Above

We cannot return to God half-heartedly, however. The Bible illustrates how God comes to the aid of His people when they are willing to honestly and sincerely seek Him. One incidence that comes to mind is 2 Chronicles, chapters 18–20. It is the story

of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah. He was a good king for the most part but he made an alliance with Israel's wicked King Ahab, and then joined with him in a battle against the Syrians where Ahab was slain. After that battle Jehu, the prophet, confronted Jehoshaphat and said to him, "Do you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the LORD'S wrath is on you. However some good is found in you, for you have removed the Asherah poles from the land and have decided to seek God" (2 Chronicles 19:2-3). Sometime after this Jehoshaphat was facing a vast multitude of enemies coming against him. He reacted by seeking the LORD. We pick up the narrative in 2 Chron. 20:1:

"After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat. Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him. Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard and said: "LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, 'If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.' "But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from

them and did not destroy them. See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD. Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.’”

The LORD did deliver Judah and there was peace for the rest of Jehoshaphat’s reign. God honored Jehoshaphat’s willingness to seek Him and to bring reforms that encouraged the people to walk with God.

The influence of a strong church, under the leadership of Christ, can defeat those who are undermining the foundations of our society. When each one of us decides to fight the good fight of faith, we shine the light of the gospel against moral decay and spiritual darkness. It is, after all, a spiritual battle, “for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world

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and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12), and it will require spiritual weapons. These weapons “have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Just as Jehoshaphat was told that the battle was not his but God’s, so it is with the battles that we fight. Satan, our enemy, was defeated at the cross of Christ. Although he is called the god of this world and “the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Ephesians 2:2), he is not greater than God who is in us. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:10, to be strong in the Lord, to put on the full armor of God, and having done this to stand firm. In other words, we are to live a life of obedience, our minds filled with the Word of God, empowered by the Spirit of God.

Power Through Weakness

Presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, followed by transforming our minds through His Word, is the essence of a surrendered life. (Romans 12:1, 2). Paul says this is our spiritual worship to Him. Therefore, our decision not to exert our self will enables us to experience Christ’s power at work in us. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 the Word of God states, “for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

Surrendering our will to God is a conscious decision that is made through prayer.

Surrendering our will to God is a conscious decision that is made through prayer. We say to Him, “Not my will but your will be done in my life at this moment.” Keep in mind that surrendering to God is a daily exercise. And because it goes against our natural way of thinking, Satan will tempt us to resist the call to surrender our will to His.

The Value of Faith *and* Works

Paul reminds us that “whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice” (Phil 4:9). Here the rubber meets the road. While it is important to read, study, meditate on the Word, and pray; it is equally important to do something with what we have learned. James 1:22 puts it this way: “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” He goes on to warn us that if we do not practice what we know, there is a real danger that we will forget what we have heard and the Word will be of no value to us.

There is a similar thought expressed in 2 Peter 1. Peter reminds us that God has given us everything we need to live a godly life. It begins with our relationship with Him. He goes on to say that through God’s Word we are able to participate in His divine nature. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are able to grow and develop the character of God in us. To our faith, we are told to add the additional virtues of goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. This is our contribution to the work that brings an abundant harvest in knowing Jesus Christ. Neglecting these virtues will result in spiritual loss causing us to forget that we have been cleansed from our former sins. We are in danger of becoming spiritually blind and we can become ineffective and unproductive in our walk with Him.

A Living Example

Paul told Timothy, “for physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come ... set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:8, 12). He goes on to say, “be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (15, 16).

This is the point: We should be living examples of what we believe. This allows others to see God at work and creates opportunities for the spreading of the gospel.

A Prayer for Action

In Colossians, Paul prays for the church: “[I] have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light (1:9-12).

The heart of his prayer is that they will understand God’s will and conduct themselves in a way that allows the fruit of the Spirit to be manifested in the work that they do. He also uses the term “worthy” when describing their walk. The meaning of this word can mean *to balance the scales*. In other words, what Paul is conveying to these believers is that they should be spiritually balanced. They should communicate to those around them that their life is a demonstration of the love of God, both in *word* and in *deed*.

Conclusion

We know that evil abounds in the world; we should respond to its philosophy with biblical insight and stand our ground against its ungodly schemes. Our answers will reflect our world view. Unless we are willing to submit ourselves to Christ and allow Him to direct our lives, the church, of which we are members, will remain weak and lethargic. Therefore we should live our lives in such a way that people are drawn to God because our walk and our talk are in sync with Him. Standing firm in our faith will not only protect us but it will also affect the world around us.

It is my prayer that you will become a catalyst for spiritual change in a world that desperately needs the good news of God's love. We have the power of the gospel to make that change. God has promised to be with us, if we will take that message and deliver it to others in His wonderful name.