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# “For ye were sometimes darkness...”

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— Keith R. Blades

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Few descriptions are as dismal and grim as those that describe our former unregenerate status before God. The words and phrases God uses to express what we once were shock our minds with the reality of how bad off we were. Consider, for example, the list of terms used in the following passage from Romans 5.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

(Romans 5:6)

"Ungodly"; that's what we were by nature. A disgusting term, describing us to be the exact opposite of what God created and purposed man to be.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

(Romans 5:7-8)

"Righteous" and "good"; that's not what we were. We were unrighteous and wicked. The exact opposite to God's own character of Righteousness and Goodness. In fact, in connection with our unrighteousness, we all possessed a moniker from God's Justice, labeling us with the very form of unrighteousness for which we had the greatest penchant. Hence, we were known to God as fornicators, liars, drunkards, covetous, boasters, and the like. As such, we were "sinners," doing things directly contrary to God's will and so only provoking Him by our deeds.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

(Romans 5:9)

"Wrath"; that's what we deserved from God. That's what our ungodliness, unrighteousness, and sinfulness merited in His sight. Therefore, we were also designated as "children of wrath." We were deserving of God's judgment and facing the ghastly prospect of the Lord's day of wrath and revelation of His righteous judgment against us.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

(Romans 5:10)

"Enemies" of God; that's the climactic term in this passage expressing the fact that we were actually hostile to God. We pursued a course of opposition to Him, being contrary to His Holiness. We functioned in opposition to God, being at odds with Him.

Other similar terms could be added to the ones used here. Collectively, they all testify to the fact that each one of us by nature was "dead in trespasses and sins," both spiritually and functionally. We were alienated from the life of God and acted accordingly. Unable to live unto God, we lived contrary to Him. Hence, by nature we were unfit for anything but judgment.

Amazingly, however, the preceding terminology does not exhaust the description of how bad off we were. In truth, things were even worse for us *being Gentiles*. As if being "dead in trespasses and sins" was not bad enough, we were actually *twice dead*. We were also "dead" before God

being Gentiles in the flesh. Notice Paul declare this.

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh,..."

(Colossians 2:13a)

Our deadness before God being Gentiles was actually two-fold. Being the "Uncircumcision" also constituted us as "dead." Paul describes this to us, for example, in Ephesians 2:11-12.

11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

(Ephesians 2:11-12)

In "time past," before God brought in this present dispensation of Gentile grace, we were "without God in the world." As such, we were naturally alienated from God and what He was doing with Israel. God was "nigh" unto Israel; but we Gentiles were "far off." Hence, we were "dead" before God not belonging to "the commonwealth of Israel."

However, though we were dead before God, we were quite alive unto someone else. Though we were not God's nation, we were the possession of another. Bluntly put, we belonged to Satan, the "power of darkness." And as such we were not simply in darkness, we were "darkness" ourselves. Israel was "the light of the world," while we were a part of the darkness. Hence, Paul declares,...

"For ye were sometimes darkness,..."

(Ephesians 5:8a)

Now, realizing that we "were sometimes darkness" ought to be appalling. To understand what this means should send a shudder of horror

through us. Briefly put, being "darkness" means we actually belonged to Satan, the devil — the very character for whom the lake of fire was created. As his, we walked according to the course that he had charted for this world. Hence, we did the things that served his purposes and furthered the objectives of his plan of evil. We brought credit to his cause and promoted his stature. In truth, without even necessarily knowing it, we honored him. This we did being "darkness," belonging to "the power of darkness."

This truly is a dreadful thing to realize. Yet it needs to be understood so that the greatness of what Christ did for us is all the more appreciated.

### The Horror of Great Darkness

Shortly after God declared unto Abraham the basics of the plan, purpose, and program He had for him and his seed, God confirmed what He had promised by making a covenant with him. However, when making the covenant God also revealed to Abraham what the first installment in Israel's program was going to be like. But what He revealed wasn't good news. In fact, it was horrifying. And Abraham knew it and felt it.

12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

(Genesis 15:12-13)

The "horror of great darkness" that fell upon Abraham was directly connected with what God was revealing to him about what was going to happen to his seed. Israel, by going into servitude in a land that was not theirs, was actually going to come under Satan's influence. Israel was going to experience what it was like to be a part of the darkness of this world. The "power of darkness" was going to be able to hold them in his grip.

They were actually going to become his captives and be afflicted by him. The realization of this greatly affected Abraham. He was given to understand what it meant, and was struck by the horror of it.

However, what Abraham realized Israel was going to experience, was the natural status of the Gentiles. God's judgment in connection with the affair of the tower of Babel not only confused the languages of men, it also consigned over the nations to Satan's possession. Satan's power as the "power of darkness" became established at that time. Years later Satan asserted his ownership of the nations of the world when he tempted the Lord to worship him.

5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

(Luke 4:5-7)

What Satan asserted was true. The kingdoms of the world had been delivered unto him. The Gentiles belonged to him. He was "the power of darkness" and they were in his power.

In view of this, after God had formed Israel and delivered them from darkness to be "the light of the world," He established the "middle wall of partition" between them and the Gentiles. He kept Israel on His side of the wall, nigh unto Himself, as His own nation, the people He had formed for Himself. With Him, Israel was "the light of the world." The Gentiles, on the other side of the wall, belonged unto Satan, being "without God in the world." And as such, we Gentiles were not just in darkness, we were "darkness." We belonged to the "power of darkness" and were *twice dead* before God because of it.

## The Greatness of Christ's Ransom

Understanding the horror of how bad off we were makes the greatness of what Christ did for us on the cross shine forth all the more. For Christ not only had to satisfy God's Justice with respect to the debt and penalty of our sins, He also had to provide for breaking the bonds of Satan's ownership of us. This He did through the ransom that His death was, as He entered into contention with the Adversary over his right of possession. In truth, a battle took place on the cross over which the power of "the power of darkness" was at stake. In connection with realizing this, and in view of what it meant to God's plan and purpose for us in this dispensation, God wants us to understand it. Therefore, Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 expresses his desire for us to know the "exceeding greatness" of God's power to us in view of what Christ has done.

19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*,...

(Ephesians 1:19-20)

Because of the power of Christ's ransom, and in accordance with "the mystery of Christ," God has exercised "the exceeding greatness of his power" to us twice dead Gentiles who believe. Hence, we are no longer "dead in sins and in the uncircumcision of our flesh." Instead, we are now quickened together with Christ and have been "delivered from the power of darkness." We are no longer "darkness." Instead, we are now the exact opposite. We are now "light in the Lord."

## The Glory of being "light in the Lord"

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light.

(Ephesians 5:8)

Now, through the greatness of Christ's ransom, God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Now, "in Christ," we are "light" and no more "darkness." We are "children of light" and as such ought to walk accordingly. No more should we follow the course of this world that Satan has charted.

However, walking consistent with who we are as "children of light" is not only the reasonable thing to do. It is also something we truly ought to be zealous to do. There is a glory associated with being "children of light" that we dare not overlook.

In view of being "light in the Lord," we now have the God-given capacity to make an impact to God's honor and praise in the face of "the power of darkness" and his "rulers of the darkness of this world." And this we do by repudiating any opportunities to have fellowship with "the unfruitful works of darkness." Hence, we are exhorted,...

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

(Ephesians 5:11-13)

As Paul says, "all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light." It is to us, who are now "light in the Lord," that this great privilege belongs. And indeed it is a privilege. Instead of merely not following the course of this world, we can actually repudiate it. Instead of simply not having fellowship with "the unfruitful works of darkness," we can reprove them in the face of the very one who desires us to continue in them and so have opportunity to speak reproachfully of us. What a privilege of God's grace for ones who "were sometimes darkness." No wonder Paul

exhorts us to "cast off the works of darkness" and to "walk circumspectly."

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

(Romans 13:12)

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

(Ephesians 5:14-16)

This, once again, is the privilege of God's grace to us, being now "light in the Lord." Yet, in truth, it is also the only consistent thing for us to do in intelligent response to the horror of once belonging to "the power of darkness." — *Keith R. Blades*