

OUT OF DARKNESS

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Zechariah (father of John the Baptist) offered word of prophecy that touched God's great purpose of salvation. As God sees our situations from a higher and clearer perspective, Zechariah's words lend us insight:

Luke 1

⁷⁸ *Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.*

God's Way

Colossians 1

¹³ *For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son,*
¹⁴ *who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.*

It is God's way to bring everything from darkness into light.

Psalm 139

¹² *To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you.*

Consider your own salvation—how grace, forgiveness, and healing flowed over you.

In a moment, your sins were forgiven and your old life was buried. A new life had begun!

And that was just the beginning!!!

Micah 7

⁸ *Do not gloat over me, my enemies! For though I fall, I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light.*

Sanctification is the ongoing process of transforming who we have been and who we are today.

Psalm 18

²⁸ *You light a lamp for me. The Lord, my God, lights up my darkness.*

Psalm 112

⁴ *Light shines in the darkness for the godly.*

Your whole life is moving into the light, more and more.

Proverbs 4 (NASB)

¹⁸ *But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.*

Eugene Peterson's *The Message* offers a unique translation of the last sentence: *The longer they live, the brighter they shine.*

Building Blocks

Stones can be problematic or destructive in life, but they can also be used for constructing good things. In the Bible, they are sometimes used as figures of such circumstances.

Every stone in your life—the stone you kicked in anger that injured your toe, the stone you didn't see that caused you to lose your balance and fall, the stone thrown in hatred that shattered your window (your view of the world), the stone that was so large it blocked your way and made you miss your opportunity—every stone in your life, God can use to build you a palace.

God uses *every* circumstance to form us into His image.

Romans 8

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Consider the darkness in your past—

- Abuse by those who should love and protect you (breaking trust, invoking fear).
- Self-abuse as an effort to cope and control the pain (alcohol, drugs, self-mutilation).
- Loss by death (shock, aloneness, uncertainty).
- Loss by divorce (betrayal, hurt, endless loop of pain and anger).

Whatever has happened to you that brought heartache or grief—by God's grace can become a light source in you for others.

Do not ignore it. Do not fear it. Do not hide it. Instead, bring it to Him. Put it in His gracious hands.

What if your marriage was not designed to make you happy...? But to make you holy...!

What if the job God provided was more than a paycheck...? What if it was given to unfold God's loving righteousness in you!

What if that irritating neighbor was appointed by God to bring out His humility in you!

What if that self-absorbed driver in the next lane was sent to help you trust God with patience!

When Darkness Meets Light

Embrace Jesus in your darkness. Hold Him right there where the pain begins again to erupt. Let His mercy enfold you and transform the effects of your pain.

Whenever darkness meets light there is a reaction—often violent.

Mark 9

²⁰ So they brought the boy. But when the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the child into a violent convulsion, and he fell to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth.

Luke 9

⁴² *As the boy came forward, the demon knocked him to the ground and threw him into a violent convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit and healed the boy. Then he gave him back to his father.* ⁴³ *Awe gripped the people as they saw this majestic display of God's power.*

Luke 8

²⁷ *As Jesus was climbing out of the boat, a man who was possessed by demons came out to meet him. For a long time he had been homeless and naked, living in a cemetery outside the town.*

²⁸ *As soon as he saw Jesus, he shrieked and fell down in front of him. Then he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Please, I beg you, don't torture me!"* ²⁹ *For Jesus had already commanded the evil spirit to come out of him.*

Thrashing, screaming—a final, all-out effort to terrorize, to overcome the light—but it cannot.

John 1

⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

God knows you. He loves you. He has called you by name to stand at His side.

He sent His Son to forgive your sins and to heal you. He gave you His Spirit so you might never be apart again.

The sins of your past cannot keep God's love away. The blood shed by Jesus is greater.

Today's fears that torment your thoughts cannot remove His hand from you. Your worries about tomorrow are not beyond His power.

Romans 8

³⁵ *Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?* ³⁷ *No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

³⁸ *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.* ³⁹ *No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Know that He loved you then. And He loves you now. That dark situation could not keep Him from you, nor could it separate you from His love. He is your Healer!

Time For Prayer

Do you need Jesus to overcome some darkness in your life? Then bring it to Him right now.

Your past will still be your past. You can still dwell on the darkness if you choose to. But Jesus will free you from the blinding pain. You will be able to look away and move forward.

Would you dare to bring it to Him today? Decide right now to consciously present your darkness to Him!

Even if it thrashes and threatens to never leave, *put it in his hands.*

I can imagine only two possible reasons that you would hesitate to do this today:

- 1) You have been freed from your darkness already (then you will pray with empathy and faith for others), or
- 2) You are still immobilized by your darkness, believing that even Jesus cannot help you (that is a lie).

Staying Free

Now, a final word of advice. Freedom is wonderful! But as we know only too well in our part of the world, freedom is under constant threat—from within and without—and can only be retained by attentive effort.

That's true of political freedom, and it's also true of spiritual freedom.

Jesus Christ sets people free—often in a moment of time! But it takes the Church to keep people free. Many people do not realize this!

Through worship, fellowship, group prayer, Bible study, and disciple-making, the Church helps maintain the freedom Jesus has given.

And, lest you misunderstand, the Church is not a club or an organization to which you simply belong—it is the interactions of any two or more believers where the presence of Jesus is recognized—within the walls of a church building or outside of them.

And, considering the ratio of hours you spend inside a church building to those you spend outside of one, it is safe to say that how you spend your time *outside* a church auditorium is more important than how you spend it inside.

You cannot maintain spiritual freedom and light just by “going to church”—even if you're here every time the doors are open! You need what the church has to offer, but you need more.

What are you doing for your spiritual freedom outside of Sunday mornings or Tuesday nights? Reading your Bible and praying? That's good! But all that input desperately needs some output (and not the kind you do for a paycheck).

Psalm 110 (NASB)

³ *Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power.*

Every godly person needs to give themselves away for free! Every Christian should be volunteering somewhere—in church ministries or in the community.

Once you've got the light, you need to let it shine! And the more you do, the more your light will shine.

Isaiah 58 (NIV)

¹⁰ *If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, **then** your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.*

So I challenge you to tell God today that you will offer your time and energy—somewhere, somehow—for free. It will be your offering of thanks for the light and the freedom He has given.

Ask Him for the opportunity to increase your light. Ask Him to show you how you can serve.