

# The Darkness-Dispeller in Darkness

by Roger Ellsworth

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*The speaker emphasizes the importance of not taking faith and the Lord Jesus for granted, and highlights the significance of the darkness on Calvary's cross as a reminder of the enormity of human sin and the need for salvation from sin.*

**Duration:** 28:20

**Scripture:** Isaiah 9:2, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 27:45-46, Mark 10:46-52, John 1:5

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Redemption"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the astonishing nature of the darkness that fell upon Golgotha when Jesus was crucified. He highlights the Lord Jesus as the dispeller of darkness and urges the audience to love Him with a burning love. The speaker discusses the unprecedented darkness that shrouded Golgotha on the day of crucifixion and emphasizes the fitting nature of this darkness. He encourages believers to regain a sense of awe and wonder over what Jesus did on Calvary's Cross. The sermon is based on Matthew 27:45-46 and aims to warm the hearts of the audience towards the Lord Jesus Christ and His redeeming work.

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## Transcript

Well, thank you so much for reminding us of that glorious truth about the saving power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's a joy and delight to be with you today. I'm always glad to be on the campus of Union University, this university that has contributed so very much to my family over the years.

I'm glad to say that both my sons, Tim and Marty, graduated from here, and I'm also glad to be able to tell you that we still send students your way from the Emanuel Church in Benton, where it's been my privilege to serve as pastor for the last several years. And sitting back here with my wife is Sarah Trotter, one of the new students here at Union, daughter of our associate pastor, and we're going to be sending her brother this way this fall as well. We thank God for the ministry of this university under the leadership of your president, Dr. Dockery.

Please find the Gospel of Matthew, the 27th chapter, Matthew chapter 27, and today I want to call a couple of verses of scripture to your attention. They are familiar verses, and the message today has the title The Darkness Dispeller in Darkness. And I will tell you right up front what I'm after today.

I want you to know that I am seeking to warm your hearts toward the Lord Jesus Christ and his redeeming work on Calvary's cross. I think that those of us who have faith in Christ have to battle very vigorously against a great enemy. And that great enemy, ladies and gentlemen, is familiarity.

Familiarity with our faith. Familiarity with our Lord Jesus. And this enemy is winning great victories today.

Most of you have known the Lord Jesus Christ for quite some time. It could very well be that we have some in our midst who have not come to faith in Christ. Well, I certainly want to win your hearts to faith in Christ.

But those of you who have known the Lord Jesus, I say you have to be on guard against this thing of taking it all for granted. And as we approach the Easter season, ladies and gentlemen, it is our duty and our privilege to rehearse the various details of the Lord Jesus Christ's suffering on Calvary's cross. And each detail is designed to bring us back to a sense of awe and wonder.

I don't know that there's anything that we more desperately need in our churches today than to have a sense of awe and wonder about what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us. I fear that this is often not the case. I fear that unbelievers can come to our churches and can sit there and not get any sense that we are overcome by what we're talking about.

Well, I trust that as we approach the Easter season and go through this season that that sense of awe and wonder will grip our hearts. If you have lost that sense of awe and wonder over what Jesus did on Calvary's cross, I hope that that sense will come back to you in these weeks that lie ahead. These two verses of Scripture from Matthew's Gospel, the 27th chapter, are just some of many verses that are designed by the Spirit of God to bring back a sense of wonder about what Jesus did.

Look at them, please. Matthew 27, verses 45 and 46. Now, from the sixth hour until the ninth hour, there was darkness over all the land.

And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani. That is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I wonder if you have ever tried to imagine yourself as an observer of the crucifixion of Jesus. Have you ever tried to, in your mind, propel yourself back through the centuries of time and take up your position there near the cross of Jesus? I ask you to try to do that now.

And here is the question that I pose. Out of all the things that unfolded there that day on Golgotha's Hill, what would rivet itself in your mind as being the most memorable? I think, ladies and gentlemen, the mere sight of the Lord Jesus would be something that we could not possibly get away from. I mean, by this time, he was a bloody mass of humanity.

The scourging had left the flesh of his back in bloody shreds. And the crown of thorns that was jammed upon his brow caused his face to be caked with blood. And the beating that he endured at the hands of both the religious leaders and the Roman soldiers meant that his face was disfigured, unrecognizable.

I say to you, the mere sight of Jesus would be unforgettable. And then we think about the sounds of the hammer that drove those nails into his flesh. And I dare to suggest to you that long after we were to be there at the cross and long after we were to come away, we would hear the sound of that hammer driving those nails.

That sound would continue to echo in our minds. And then there was that rabble of humanity gathered there at the foot of the cross. There were the religious leaders hurling their insults at Jesus.

And there were those profane Roman soldiers there gambling for his garments, uttering their profanities and their blasphemies as they did so. Well, with a whole multitude of details surrounding the cross of Jesus, I suggest to you this morning that the darkness that fell over the land for those three hours from noon to three might indeed be the most memorable. That was darkness such as had never been known before.

Charles Spurgeon said it was midnight at midday. And William Hendrickson, one of the finest commentators on the four Gospels, calls that darkness intense and unforgettable. Now, you and I probably think that we can relate to this darkness.

I mean, we know what darkness is. And we probably think that we have seen times of darkness that equal this time. But I say to you, ladies and gentlemen, that this was darkness such as had never been known before.

You have never been in the darkness that shrouded God's people. You have never seen Paul Gotha that day for those three hours. This was darkness that was so deep that one could have held the hand, his hand in front of his face and could not have even detected that his hand was there.

And I ask you to think with me in the moments that we have remaining about this darkness. And I say to you again that my purpose in doing so is to win your heart all over again for what took place there on Calvary's cross. I'm here after your hearts today.

I want to fan the flame of love that you, child of God, already have in your heart for Christ. But I know that sometimes the flames of love can burn low. I know it from my own experience.

I know it from observing those whom it is my privilege to serve as pastor. Yes, the flame of love can burn low, and sometimes it burns so very low that, as Thomas Boston, the great Puritan author, put it, we can get down to just the dying embers. And that may be where your love is today.

That may be where your faith is. Once the flame leaped brightly, once it leaped very high, but now you're down just to the glowing embers. And you think about that cross, but you don't feel anything.

I'm after your hearts today. I make no apology for that. And I say to you that while you're engaged in your academic pursuits, you are not relieved of the responsibility to love the Lord Jesus Christ with a burning love.

And so I ask you to think with me about this darkness as one of the most memorable details of that wretched day of crucifixion. And I ask you to think with me in particular about three things today. I want you to think with me, first of all, about the astonishing nature of this darkness, the astonishing nature of it.

And then secondly, the fitting nature of this darkness. We're talking about unprecedented darkness that shrouded Golgotha that day. The astonishing nature of it and the fitting nature of it.

And finally and briefly, the compelling nature of it. Now, just a few words about the astonishing nature of the darkness that fell upon Golgotha when Jesus was crucified. I call it astonishing, ladies and gentlemen, because the Lord Jesus Christ was there as the dispeller of darkness.

Think about the Lord Jesus as the dispeller of darkness. I take you all the way back to the first chapter of the Bible, Genesis chapter 1. And you remember that the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And here is the first instance we have in scripture of Jesus being the darkness dispeller, because the Bible tells us that the Lord God spoke and said, let there be light.

And the darkness was driven away. Someone will say, you mean to say that Jesus was involved in that? Yes, I'd say to you on the basis of what the Apostle Paul says in Colossians chapter 1, that Jesus was there and involved in creation. We can attribute that dispelling of darkness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But come now with me. Push the fast forward button through all the centuries of the Old Testament and come with me now to little Bethlehem. And the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, takes unto Himself our humanity.

He is born at night in Bethlehem. And I mentioned a while ago the fitting nature of this darkness on Calvary's cross. We will come to that.

But I say to you, it was very fitting. It was very appropriate that the Lord Jesus Christ should be born at night there in Bethlehem. The reason it was fitting is because He came as we shall have occasion to notice a bit more fully, to drive away the darkness of our sin.

But ladies and gentlemen, when Jesus was born that night in Bethlehem, we read that the shepherds were suddenly bathed in light as they watched over their flocks there in the fields outside Bethlehem. And that was testimony to the fact that the dispeller of darkness had come. And then I think of that account of the man who was possessed by many demons.

You're familiar with the account. His name was Legion. He was occupied with so many demons that he could be called nothing else, Legion.

And oh, what a wretched man he was. And we're told that they tried to bind him, but they could not. And this man went about shrieking in his agony and terrorizing all those around.

But Jesus, the darkness dispeller, came and drove the demons out of this man and left him clothed and in his right mind. And you have a wonderful account of it there in Mark chapter 5. And that same fifth chapter of Mark's gospel talks to us about a man named Jairus who came to Jesus because his daughter was so very gravely ill. And this man named Jairus wanted Jesus to come and heal his daughter.

And while he was there seeking the help of Jesus, you remember what happened. His servants came and said, do not trouble the master, referring to Jesus, do not trouble the master any longer, sir. Your daughter has died.

I'm so glad to be able to tell you though that death is no trouble for Jesus. And Jesus went with Jairus and came there to the room where his dead daughter was lying and Jesus, the darkness dispeller, drove the darkness of death away and raised that young woman from the dead. Yes, Jesus is the darkness dispeller.

And I can cite more instances as well. I can talk to you about Bartimaeus, that man who had never seen the beautiful hues of the sunset, had never seen the flowers, had never seen children playing out in the streets. This man was blind.

And there he sits as Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem to keep the appointment that is represented to us here in Matthew chapter 27. Jesus, yes, had an appointment with Calvary's cross. Will I astonish you if I say that Jesus had that appointment from before the foundation of the world.

And as Jesus makes his way there to Jerusalem to keep that appointment set for him by the Father, he encounters blind Bartimaeus. Oh, Bartimaeus cried out as Jesus approached, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus, we're told, stopped there and drove the darkness of Bartimaeus away, opened his eyes.

This is Jesus, the darkness dispeller. I can talk to you about the man born blind in John chapter 9 and how Jesus sent him to the pool of Siloam to wash and caused his darkness to go away as well. And so, ladies and gentlemen, I tell you that this is astonishing that we have here in these verses in Matthew chapter 27 the report of darkness gripping the land because the one dying on that cross in those hours was none less than the darkness dispeller.

He dispelled the darkness at creation. He dispelled the darkness at Bethlehem. He dispelled the darkness of Legion.

He dispelled the darkness of Jairus and Jairus' family. He dispelled the darkness of Bartimaeus. He dispelled the darkness of the man born blind in John chapter 9. And make no mistake about it, this Jesus hanging on the cross during these hours reported here in Matthew 27 could have dispelled that darkness as well.

And so this is astonishing. I say to you that Jesus was here in this darkness because he was the darkness dispeller. But why? Why when this darkness descends upon the land, deep darkness, so deep that it cannot be penetrated, why does Jesus not dispel this darkness on this occasion? He obviously had the power.

The power that he could at any moment command legions of angels to come to his aid. He could have dispelled the darkness. Don't you know that the Lord Jesus who spoke there in Genesis chapter 1 and said, let there be light, could have said the very same words on this occasion and the darkness would have fled away? Why, I ask again, did Jesus not dispel this darkness as he was hanging there on the cross? I have a couple of answers for you.

I want to tell you that first of all, this darkness was a fitting testimony to the sin of man. It was a fitting testimony to man the sinner. It was a fitting testimony to the enormity of man's sin.

I love these lines from the poet. A man imagines himself being a witness there to the crucifixion and he said, I ask the heavens, what foe to God has done this unexampled deed, referring to the crucifixion? And the heavens explained, t'was a man's sin, t'was man. And the heavens continued, and we in horror snatched the son from this spectacle of sin and shame.

Oh, I say to you, ladies and gentlemen, it was fitting that darkness should grip the land when Jesus was crucifying to testify to the reality of human sin and to testify to the enormity of human sin. We these days have a tendency to take sin very lightly and this is the reason we do not appreciate the cross of Christ. The cross of Jesus will never win your heart until sin absolutely bewilders you.

Until sin baffles you, Calvary will never amaze you. I'm so thankful for the book written some time ago by Dr. R.C. Sproul, Saved From What? And we're living in very unusual times for many reasons and one of

the things that makes this such an unusual time, ladies and gentlemen, is we want to talk about being saved but it seems as if in many churches there's nothing to be saved from. Oh, the darkness of Calvary that day gave eloquent testimony to the fact that there is something to be saved from.

It was man in his sin that nailed the Lord Jesus Christ to the cross. Let me come here to an even more essential reason that Jesus did not drive the darkness away that day. I'm talking to you about the fitting nature of this darkness and I'm telling you it was fitting that darkness should be there as a testimony to man the sinner but I'm also telling you that it was fitting that darkness should be there that day as a testimony to Christ the sin bearer.

Do you understand the cross of Christ? If you tell me as I'm preaching to you today about the cross, well, I'm not much interested in this. If this is the thought that's racing through your mind, pounding in your mind now. If you're sitting there saying, well, when will this be over? When will the man go home? Oh, no, I'm not much interested in this.

I say to you it is an indication that you have never, never understood the cross of Christ. Oh, what was going on there? What is the meaning of it all? What was taking place there on the cross? We tend to have sentimental and syrupy views of the cross and never get to the real nub of the matter. Some people say, well, here's what the cross means and they should extend their arms and say he loved us this much.

Oh, ladies and gentlemen, he loved us far more than that. And here is the magnitude of his love, the degree of his love. Jesus Christ was nailed to that cross, ladies and gentlemen, to take the penalty, to take the penalty for sin.

I know this isn't fashionable. I don't much care. You won't report me, will you, if I share with you this little tidbit.

I tell you the penalty for our sin, ladies and gentlemen, is nothing less than hell itself. And hell is the place of infinite darkness. Now listen, if Jesus was there on the cross to bear the penalty of my sin, it was fitting then that he should be in darkness like this because that is part of the penalty for my sin, eternal darkness.

And here is the greatness of the love of God that put Jesus there. And here is the love of Jesus in hanging there on that cross. He went there to bear the full weight of the wrath of God.

He went there to bear an eternity's worth of wrath against my sin. And I suggest to you that the very next verse, after this verse that talks about the darkness, the very next verse gives us the true meaning of the cross. We have Jesus crying out there, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And ladies and gentlemen, I say to you, that is what hell is.

In addition to being a place of darkness, it is the place of God-forsakenness. And if Jesus went there to bear my penalty, he had to be forsaken of God. He had to bear my darkness.

He had to bear my God-forsakenness. I don't know how it is with you, but I can't help but worship when we are in any service where that old hymn is lifted up, Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe.

Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow. Oh, I've talked to you about the astonishing nature of this darkness.

It was astonishing because Jesus was the darkness dispeller. And here he is in darkness. I've talked to you about the fitting nature of it.

It was fitting because it gave testimony to man the sinner, and it also gave testimony to Christ the sin bearer, bearing the penalty that we deserve for our sins. And now, just a word in closing about my third point, which I have already been mentioning and that is the compelling nature of this darkness. I think about the Lord Jesus Christ hanging there in the blackest, blackest blackness imaginable, the blackest darkness imaginable.

And I say to myself, Roger Ellsworth, he was there for you. He did not have to come. He did not have to go there to Calvary's cross.

He did not have to see you receive the wrath of God. He did not have to take the penalty for your sins, but he did. Oh, what grace.

And I find that that redeeming work of Jesus calls to me, compels me. It calls to me and says, do you not feel gratitude for what the Lord Jesus Christ did for you? Do you not understand that he took your hell so that you never have to experience hell? And the call comes down to me from through the centuries of time from that distant day and says, oh, do you not want to serve this Christ? Do you not want to give him your very best? Do you not want to worship him and serve him with all that you have? He took your darkness so you never have to experience that darkness. But so when that glorious time comes when you are in his presence, you will be bathed in eternal light.

I plead with you, this Easter season, as we approach Easter Sunday, replay again and again and again the saving work of Jesus until your heart is warm, until the darkness of apathy melts away and you are again lost in wonder, love, and joy. And praise. May God help you to do so.

Amen.

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