

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. *Ephesians 5.11.*

Do you think it strange in *Eph* that whenever St Paul thinks of his fellow Christians and the world they were in once, he has this 'them and us' attitude? As pagans they used to be in darkness; now as followers of Christ they are in light, v8... But is this fair? Is it really 'darkness' out there? You could argue that 2000 years ago there was a lot of superstition, pagan immorality. Life was cheap. Women and children and slaves had no rights. Unwanted babies were exposed on hillsides. Yes, pagan Roman society was possibly darkness then, but surely not today? Don't we live in a more enlightened age, an age of reason and science, of tolerance and progress?

You might think that, but sadly that isn't reality. I don't want now to paint a depressing picture of doom and gloom in our society. It would be easy to go on about the drugs and alcohol epidemic, family breakdown, loss of confidence in our political class, war, poverty and injustice in the world, but let's not forget the good. We don't put children up chimneys any more or lock up the mentally ill. One great innovation of recent years is the hospice movement for the dying.

So let's not go down the doom and gloom route, but let's recognise that there is a world of darkness and a world of light. That is certainly St Paul's analysis in *Eph* and his point is that you are either in one or the other. Darkness means that you can't see, and that you can't be seen. I think that that is not a bad description of the spiritual state of our nation. We can't see where we are going. We're lost. The

only moral compass for many today is 'What's in it for me? What can I get away with?' There's no sense of shared purpose as there was in the Blitz when we faced a common enemy.

In darkness you can't see, and you can't be seen. No-one's accountable any more. That's the big complaint against the EU. It passes laws and imposes taxes but answers to no-one. Who is responsible for the PAYE fiasco? Has he got the sack? Nothing is ever my fault, is it? It was her. She's the reason my marriage failed. Sir Nicholas Wall, the Judge who is President of the Family Division, has told parents who use their children as the weapons and the battle-ground for their divorce settlements, to wise up. Can they not see what damage they are doing? Credit crunch? Not me, guv! We all love to blame the filthy rich bankers with their obscene bonuses for our financial woes, but others played their part too, including the Government which relaxed regulation *and* ourselves who took out ridiculous loans as if there were no tomorrow.

The great characteristic of the 20thC was the wholesale abandonment of God. Once people had conveniently got rid of God, there was now no higher authority they had to answer to. No hell or eternal punishment. So now the road was clear for Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, Mao and all the rest of them to do just what they wanted. In the darkness they couldn't be seen. The murderous egomaniacs thought no-one was above them now.

Another thing that can happen in the dark is that things can creep up on you unawares. How did Britain become overrun by the cancer of drugs in just one generation? Until the 60s only the racier elements of the smart set took drugs. Now they're

everywhere, and we just accept it as inevitable. Decriminalise drugs, they say. You'll never stop them. That's as daft as saying, Release all murderers and thieves from prison. Prison doesn't work; you'll never stop people killing and robbing each other. That really *is* darkness. Where's the moral compass?

How did that dark veil so cover the German people in the 1930s that they came to think, in this advanced, sophisticated and progressive nation, that it was all right to exterminate Jews? How did *that* creep up on them all? In our own country, how did Health and Safety, Political Correctness, creep up on us to strangle the life out of us? How did the EU slyly take over our sovereignty and totally transform our society? How did we allow the nice-sounding EU Working Time Directive to transform our doctors' hours so that now patients' lives are at risk and there is deep concern that future consultants won't gain the necessary experience? How did the Police Force morph into the Police *Service*, now no longer there as law-enforcers but as a branch of the social services? As a result whole estates have now been abandoned to the yobs and drug-dealers. People are defenceless and frightened. How did we allow it to come to this? Every teacher I come across tells me, 'I love teaching, but the paper-work, the targets, the box-ticking are killing me'. How did *that* happen? No-one wants these things, but they're all here to stay. How did it all happen? Why?

Don't be fooled by the genteel bubble of Harrogate. Yet even here there are pockets of darkness, nasty things going on under our noses, and people in the darkness of despair.

St Paul is right to say that there is a world of darkness

and a world of light; and we must choose which world we want to inhabit. We Christians need to wake up to the spiritual struggle that is going on. The devil is at work and he works very successfully under cover of darkness. Turn to p708, *Is* 25.7, 'the shroud that enfolds all peoples'... Now to p1160, *2 Cor* 4.4... We in GB are in a spiritual and moral Dark Age.

So what can we do? Throw up our hands in horror? First, get into God's Word and see what is happening. See that there is actually a spiritual struggle going on between God and Satan, the Prince of Darkness, with us caught in the middle.

Let's return to p1176, to *Eph* 5.14: 'Wake up!' Wake up to what is happening. Don't compromise and try to live in both worlds. Make your mind up for Christ. Only he is Light. Only he is Truth. vv8-9... *Expose* the deeds of darkness.

Jesus is the Light of the world, but in the Sermon on the Mount at *Matt* 5.14 he actually called us 'the light of the world'. Incredible! We are light when we let Christ, the Light of the world, into our lives. So *be* light wherever God has placed you in your neighbourhood and your place of work. You know, it doesn't actually take much light to get rid of darkness; just a tiny flickering candle in a dark room soon gives enough light. Why are people so determined to get high on drugs and alcohol? Because they are spiritually empty. Their lives mean nothing; they're going nowhere, and deep down they know it. They have a God-shaped hole which they try to fill with substances. Why not let Jesus fill that hole? v18... People desperately need to see the light, the light of Christ. Your calling is to be light to them in their darkness.