

Finding Light in the Darkness

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Psalm 112:4

4 Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous.

Even Christians face challenges in dealing with the daily stress of living. Spiritual battles are often hidden in the form of issues with family, friends, finances, job, health, managing the day to day activities, and sometimes personal disaster. Within each of these, Satan often works to divide our focus, confuse our thoughts, and weaken our will to follow the spiritual compass Christ brings to us through the Holy Spirit. Satan makes the wrong choices and decisions easy, while intentionally creating obstacles to making the correct decision.

As a result, spiritual darkness can creep into our lives slowly and subtly just as the dusk slowly turns to night. When faced with such darkness, we can see very little. Friends, family and even mentors may seem distant, or even invisible. Destructive doubts on every front often result in a focus on our problems to the exclusion of all else. This focus can lead to a loss of peace, joy and even to real depression.

I understand how that can happen. I read an anonymous quote that said, “When you’re surrounded by alligators biting you in the “!X@%!!” [posterior], it’s hard to remember your initial objective was to drain the swamp!”

The Psalmist tells us how to act when surrounded by darkness or as in the quote above, surrounded by alligators. The Psalmist tells us to be “upright,” and then goes on to define what “upright,” means.

1. Be Gracious

One common definition of “**gracious.**” is someone marked by **kindness** and **courtesy**. Yet we often forget or are blind to opportunities to be kind and courteous. This is because we instinctively judge people on a multitude of levels. We judge whether someone is smarter than we are, is a friend, is a foe; is likely richer or poorer, and whether someone could help us in some way in the future. Unfortunately, whether we are aware of it or not, it is a natural, inevitable process. However, it is one in which we can choose how it influences our social interaction with people.

Consciously or unconsciously, having made these assumptions about people, how do we treat them? Are we only kind and courteous to those we perceive as friends or potential benefactors, or do they become invisible to us?

2. Be Compassionate

The dictionary identifies compassion as a desire to help alleviate a problem for a person(s). But it adds a phrase that many people are unaware of. The phrase added is, “sympathetic consciousness.” “Sympathetic consciousness” implies more than just a desire to help. It implies an

awareness that our assumptions about other people block or ignore. Jesus sought out the downtrodden, the broken and castaways because He was first, “**aware,**” of their distress. While these people were invisible to society, Jesus conscious sympathy motivated Him to seek and help.

3. Be Righteous

The scripture makes it clear that God attributed the **faith** of some people in the Old Testament as “righteousness” in Christ, though they could not see Christ. However, in today’s world, righteous living for us means we should not just claim forgiveness in Christ, but live according to His example.

Although “uprightness,” may be achievable by almost everyone in the short term, it is not sustainable without an ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit. A person may be able to sustain a gracious spirit, and compassion for one’s fellow man for a time. However, without the third trait, “righteousness,” the other two will cease when the alligators close in and darkness settles over us.

Although righteousness was attributed to those who had faith in a savior they could not see, today we have evidence and the testimony of those who have seen Christ. For us to be righteous before God, we must have faith in Jesus Christ, the very revelation of God, who was often described as the “...light of the world...”, in John 8:12.

In summary, the key to walking in the light God provides is to live lives characterized by, graciousness, conscious compassion, and righteousness. The light as described by the Psalmist or by the disciple John, both chase away spiritual darkness, and illuminate the path to overcome all challenges in a way that glorifies God.

Examine yourself this week, and make sure you are staying in the “Light” of God with graciousness, compassion, and righteousness.