

## INTRODUCTION

We are in a section of John where we have learned that God doesn't condemn us as sinners, instead He wants to save us. But before God can save us we must admit that we are sinners.

Growing up in South Alabama, I learned that peanuts are a cash crop down there. One Sunday, a pastor who moved to South Alabama and didn't know anything about the peanut industry preached on the need for us to confess our sins. After the service a couple of rough little boys, obviously brothers, approached the pastor. The older brother said, "Preacher, I need to confess my sin. I have been throwing peanuts into the ditch." The preacher said, "Son, God will forgive you." The next Sunday the same two boys came up. The older one said again, "Preacher, I'm so sorry but I keep on sinning. This week I threw Peanuts into the river." The preacher said, "God will forgive you." But the preacher wondered what so bad about those sins, so he asked the younger brother. "Do you think what your brother is doing is bad?" The younger brother nodded and said, "I sure do. My name is Peanuts."

All sin is sin to a holy God, and we must admit we are sinners before we can receive His free gift of eternal life.

John 3:18-21 CSB. "Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God."

Jesus is the Master teacher, because He uses ordinary concepts like salt, light, birds, and flowers to teach us about God. We all understand light and darkness. Alongside the literal truth of light and darkness, there is a spiritual truth as well. In the Bible, light is designated as truth and goodness, and darkness is used to characterize evil and deception. Hell is described as a place of outer darkness and the devil is called the Prince of Darkness. On the other hand, the Bible says God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. The distinction between light and darkness is a key theme in the Gospel According to John. In this message, we will examine the spiritual truth about light and darkness. And then we'll explore a couple of practical applications of what it means to come to the light, and to walk in the light.

### I. LIGHT IS A POWERFUL SYMBOL FOR GOD.

In the New Testament, we read that God is Spirit, and that God is love. And in 1 John 1 we learn that God is light. The Bible says, "This is the message we have heard from him and we declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5 NIV)

According to Albert Einstein, light is the only constant in the universe. In 1905 he proposed his famous equation:  $E=MC^2$ . It describes his theory of relativity. E is energy, measured in ergs. M

represents the mass of an object. And  $C$  is the speed of light squared. For those of us who didn't major in physics, here's what Einstein was postulating—remember, it's only a theory. Even a tiny mass, traveling at a tremendous speed can produce great energy. That led to nuclear fission, and to the atomic bomb, and to nuclear energy.

No person can actually calculate the speed of light accurately, but according to Albert Einstein, the speed of light is 186,234 miles per second. So, here's the theory of relativity. If you are driving down I-20 at 70 miles per hour and a car passes you traveling 75 miles per hour, the relative speed of that car to yours is just 5 miles per hour. Einstein claimed that light doesn't have that property. If a spaceship could travel at the speed of light, and another spaceship passed it they would both be going the same speed, the only variable in that case would be time. That's why, theoretically, if the Starship Enterprise COULD fly faster than the speed of light it could go back in time.

Are you thoroughly confused? Actually, that was all a theory. And modern physics has questioned the validity of some of Einstein's theories. Einstein was actually a pretty witty guy. My favorite quote by him is "We all know that light travels faster than sound. That's why certain people appear bright until you hear them speak."

But the point I'm making is that when Einstein was looking for one constant in the universe, it is interesting that he chose light. He said that the speed of light never changes. And the Bible, God, who is light, says, "I change not." Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God is light. The Bible doesn't say God has a light and it doesn't say he is like a light, but that God IS light. What does "God is light" mean? There are at least four ways that light can teach us something about God.

### **A. Physically, light represents God's glory.**

Whenever you read the word "glory" you should think about a brilliant shining light. There's a beautiful word used in the Old Testament to describe God's glory, it's the word "Shekinah." It was a word used to describe the literal radiating presence of God, the brilliance of God. In the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, when God showed up, things brightened up. In Exodus, when the Israelites build the tabernacle in the wilderness and offered the sacrifice the bible literally says there was a light, fire that fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. At night a fiery pillar led them and illuminated their camp while they were in the wilderness. That brilliance is the Shekinah glory of God.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, angels appeared to the shepherds and the Bible says the Glory of the Lord shone around them. The night sky was supernaturally illuminated by God's glory.

### **B. Intellectually, light represents God's truth.**

In Psalm 119 we learn that God's Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Our hearts and minds are darkened until we come into the light of His truth.

Have you ever struggled with a difficult problem and all of a sudden you get the knowledge and the insight, like you suddenly "saw the light"?

### **C. Morally, light represents God's goodness.**

"God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." Morally, light refers to God's holiness. There is a double negative in the original Greek of that verse. In English, a double negative is poor grammar. We're not never supposed to use double negatives. But in the Greek language, a double negative intensifies what is being said. So literally it is saying, "In God there is not never any darkness." That's poor grammar but it is great theology.

There is nothing in the nature of God that would even suggest or hint of impurity or sin or filth.

The Bible says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17 NIV). With God there is no shadow, no darkness. Right now I'm casting six shadows because of the lights in here, but if suddenly I begin to radiate and emanate light brighter than the lights around me, I wouldn't have a shadow—I would throw light and make shadows. God casts no shadow because He is the brightest light, and no other light can overshadow Him. So one song God could never sing would be, "Me and my Shadow."

### **D. Spiritually, light represents God's life.**

In the beginning, there was nothing but chaos and darkness, and God's said, "Light be!" And there was light. And then because there was light, there was life. Where there is light, there can be life.

In John 1, Jesus was described this way, "In Him was life and this life was the light of men." Life and light are connected. The only reason there is life on planet earth is because there is the light. Without the light of the sun, there would be no life.

In the sixth grade, I developed a simple science project that won first place in our science fair. It was an experiment demonstrating photosynthesis. The light of the sun shining on plants produces life. To demonstrate this I took a healthy potted plant and cut out some paper circles and attached them to different parts of the leaves. I put the plant beside the school window so it was exposed to the sun. I watered the plant and took notes for four weeks.

At the end of the four weeks, I removed the paper circles. The part of the leaves that hadn't been exposed to the light were grey and dead, while the rest of the leaves were green and healthy. Light creates life. In the same way, Jesus, the light of the world, has come that we might have life, real life.

So, light is a powerful symbol of God.

## **II. GOD'S LIGHT EXPOSES THE DARKNESS OF OUR SIN.**

The Bible says the people walking in darkness have seen a great light. That light is Jesus, but one of the unpleasant things about the light is that it clearly exposes our sin. It is an unpleasant experience to be used to living in the dark and to be suddenly exposed to the bright light.

There have been times when I have been clearing off property and I will lift up a big rock. When I lift up the rock, there are all kinds of creepy crawly things exposed to the sunlight, and they don't run to the light, they try to crawl back into darkness. In our sinful condition, that's our same reaction. In this passage, the Bible says that a person can have a love/hate relationship with the light. Either you love the darkness and hate the light, or you hate the darkness and love the light. Darkness is unbelief, and light is belief.

### **A. When we were lost we loved the darkness.**

One of Simon and Garfunkel's greatest hits was "The Sound of Silence." It began, "Hello, darkness my old friend; I've come to talk to you again." It's sad, but true, that our natural inclination is to run from the light and to hide in the darkness. Spiritual darkness was our friend in our lost condition.

This scripture says that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. Before we placed our faith in Jesus, we were living in the darkness of sin. Like those creepy crawly things under the rock, we came to love the darkness. And, we have a real spiritual enemy who wants to KEEP us in the darkness. The Bible says, "The god of this age [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:4 NIV) When a person is an unbeliever, they are living in the darkness, and they are love the darkness because their deeds are evil.

### **B. When we come to Christ we hate the darkness.**

Once we hear the truth about the good news of God's forgiveness, it is like someone turning on a light in our soul. We've all seen the cartoons where a light bulb flashes on above a character's head when they have an idea. That's what happens when we receive the truth about Jesus. It's like walking out of the darkness into the light. Suddenly, we can see everything clearly. Salvation occurs when Jesus moves us from the darkness into His glorious light.

In Ephesians 5:8 we read about this transformation from darkness to light. The Bible says, "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8 CSB) As children of the light, we are to walk in the light as He is in the light.

In 1947 a young singer/songwriter Hank Williams was sleeping the back seat of a car driven by his mother. They were returning home to Montgomery, Alabama after a late-night concert. When his mother saw the light at the Dannelly Field Airport she said, "I can see the light. We're almost home."

That statement inspired Hank to write the song, "I saw the Light." The words say, "I wandered so aimless, life filled with sin. I wouldn't let my Dear Savior in. Then Jesus came like a stranger in the night. Praise the Lord I saw the light. I saw the light, I saw the light. No more darkness, no more night. Now I'm so happy, no sorrow in sight. Praise the Lord, I saw the light."

I'm glad Hank was happy with no sorrow when he wrote that song. Because his life spiraled into darkness. He didn't keep walking in that light that he saw. At age 29, four years after he wrote those words, he died in back seat of a Cadillac on the way to another concert. But Hank understood the spiritual truth that salvation is seeing the light and coming to the light.

There's the truth. Darkness represents sin and light represents the life that God gives us. But how do we apply this? How do we live as children of light in such a darkened culture?

Here are two personal applications:

### **1. WHEN I COME TO HIS LIGHT, GOD'S LOVE SHINES THROUGH ME.**

"For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6 CSB)

The context of this passage in 1 Corinthians 4 is referring Moses' shining face after He met with God. When Moses went up on Mount Sinai God not only revealed His commandments to Moses, He revealed His glory to Moses. The presence of God passed by Moses as he was sheltered in a shallow cave in the side of the mountain. And the powerful afterglow of God's goodness lit up the face of Moses. When Moses came down the mountain, his face was literally shining with the Shekinah glory of God. It was shining so brightly that they had to put a veil over his face.

Can't you imagine if you were Moses' wife trying to go to sleep? She said, "Honey, will you turn that light off?" Moses said, "The light's not on, it's just my face." "Cover that thing up." He was literally glowing from having been in the presence of God. That can happen spiritually to you. As you spend time with the light, the Lord Jesus Christ, His light begins to shine through you to others.

One of the "I am" statements of Jesus in John 8 is where He said, "I am the light of the world." But in Matthew 5:14, Jesus also said "You are the light of the world." So how do we balance those two truths?

Think of it this way. We have two lights in the sky, the sun and the moon. But the moon doesn't generate any light, it only *reflects* the light of the sun. The sun generates and radiates light.

When it comes to goodness and truth, Jesus is the light of world who generates goodness and truth, and we are like the moon reflecting His light to in a dark world.

Here's the second personal application. People often ask, "Okay, I'm supposed to be a light to the world. Just HOW can I let my light shine for Jesus?" Here's the practical answer.

## **2. I LIGHT MY WORLD WITH ACTS OF KINDNESS THAT PUT THE SPOTLIGHT ON GOD.**

Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16 CSB)

When George H.W. Bush was President, he awarded "Points of Light" awards for people who had done remarkable acts of kindness. While in office, he awarded six awards a week. Since leaving office, a Points of Light Foundation has been established, and 6,000 different Americans have received the award. I think that's wonderful—but if you're performing an act of kindness to get an award, you've missed the point of light Jesus made. He said let your light shine so that when people see your good works, they don't praise YOU, they praise God.

When we let our light shine, we are practicing evangelism. We think of evangelism as Billy Graham preaching to thousands, that IS evangelism. We think of evangelism as someone sitting down and drawing three circles to explain salvation. That is evangelism. We think of evangelism as sharing the Four Spiritual Laws with someone. But many of us are too intimidated to do that every day.

One of the most effective methods of evangelism is servant evangelism. It is performing acts of kindness in the name of Jesus. When you do that you are planting seeds of the Gospel. But the key, according to Jesus is that you can't claim the credit for your kindness. You must somehow put the spotlight on God so that He gets the glory. Here are some ways you can do that.

If you pay for a stranger's meal at a restaurant, and they thank you for your kindness you can put the spotlight on God by saying, "You're welcome. I was just trying to reflect the kindness that God has shown to me." In a drive through, if you pay for the car behind you, be sure to tell the cashier to just tell the driver. "The person in front of you has paid your cost just to remind you that God loves you." Or put a \$20 bill and a gospel tract in an envelope and put it under the windshield of the dirtiest, oldest car in the parking lot. That way you don't get any credit, and your kindness points people to God. I challenge you to be creative in performing acts of kindness that put the spotlight on God instead of on you.

## **CONCLUSION**

Will you light your world? Don't worry about lighting the whole planet; just allow your light to shine forth in your little world. Your world may be your family, your workplace, your classroom, or your neighborhood. Back in the 1980s one of my favorite Christian groups was NewSong. They recorded a song entitled, "Light Your World" and gave several examples of how followers of Jesus can light their world. One verse tells this story:

Two doors down one rocking chair is rocking; She sits there all alone, her husband dead and gone. The best years of her life they spent together; He was always strong, but now she's on her own. And the telephone never rings; No one laughs, no one sings; It's quiet there; does anybody care? A knocking at her door breaks the silence; She looks out to see a little boy from down the street. She cracks the door, surprised that he came over; Flowers in his hand, like a little gentleman. He said, "I picked these just for you; I hope you like the color blue. Could I stay awhile? I love to see you smile." Light your world; Let the love of God shine through In the little things you do, Light your world. And though your light may be; Reaching only two or three; Light your world!

Your personal world needs you to let the light of Jesus shine through you.

I learned an interesting thing about Benjamin Franklin recently. Do you know why we have streetlights in every city? Benjamin Franklin was living in Philadelphia, so he put a lantern on a tall pole outside his office in Philadelphia. He thought it would be a good idea to have a light shining out there all night long. He did not go on a campaign to put streetlights on every street in Philadelphia or to have streetlights all across America; he just faithfully lit his lantern every night. But when he lit his lantern every night, others saw it and thought it was a good idea. Before long every street in Philadelphia had a streetlight. Today you go across America and just about every street in America has a streetlight simply because one man said, "I just want to light up where I live."

That's what Jesus is calling us to do, to just light up where we live. So, as we sang as kids, "This little light of mine. I'm gonna' let it shine. Let it shine; let it shine; let it shine!"

## OUTLINE

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- B. Intellectually, light represents God's truth.
- C. Morally, light represents God's goodness.
- D. Spiritually, light represents God's life.

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## PERSONAL APPLICATION:

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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