



John 3:19-21

The Light and the Darkness

19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

21 "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Kids, most of you have probably never lived any place like this, and I hope you never will. But I once lived in a roughly 150 year old town home in Alexandria, VA. It was so old that the bricks and plaster of the wall were literally rotting away and the chimney leaned at a precarious angle. Well if you went into the kitchen at night and turned on the light suddenly, it was like the Camptown races. Hundreds of Roaches would go scurrying in every direction headed back under the stove and the refrigerator, and behind the cabinets, anywhere to get out of the light they feared and that exposed them and back into the safety and comfort of darkness. You don't have to live somewhere terrible to watch that happening incidentally. Just turn over a large rock or log in the forest and you'll find countless bugs all trying to do the same thing.

Those Roaches in the kitchen are happy in the darkness, and when the light suddenly comes in, they don't say "*thank you, thank you for revealing us and our work to the world*" they see it as a danger and a threat. They hate it and they head back to the darkness. It is their nature to love darkness and hate light.

Now the word of God tells us that it is not just various types of bugs that hate light and love darkness, the Word actually tells us that the same is true of men. Now not literally of course, we don't generally hate natural light, although there are times when we prefer that our deeds be done under cover of darkness and our greatest fear would be the sudden illumination of a camera flash. No, the darkness the Bible speaks of is the darkness of evil, the darkness of sin and rebellion against God. It's an association even unbelievers can intuitively grasp, its why in the opening scene of Star Wars Darth Vader is clad entirely in black, and Princess Leia is clad entirely in White. Lucas wanted the audience to know immediately which side was evil, and which side was good.

Well, what Bible tells us is that ever since the fall of man, humans have by nature had dark hearts, "*the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*" as God declares in Genesis 8:21. I've made you turn there so many times I won't do it again, but that is one of the main points that Paul is getting at in Romans 1:18-32. Because we are fallen *our foolish hearts are darkened*. No man needs to be taught to cheat and lie and steal and break all of God's commandments, because that's his nature. We aren't born innocent, and then we become sinners because we sin, we sin because we are by nature sinners. Now, by God's grace we aren't all as bad as we can be, and we may look quite innocent on the outside, but we are all born, to quote the George Thoroughgood song "*Bbbbad to the Bone.*"

Now in the Bible God and his word are the great light, as John puts it elsewhere “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” and as the Psalmist confesses in Psalm 119:105 ***Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path*** and even after the fall that light has always been present in the world. God is the great illuminator, the great revealer, the great bringer of truth and destroyer of lies, and Jesus was the culmination of His revelation, so much so that He was able to say that he was *the* light of the world, and to say “I am *the* way, *the* truth, and *the* life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” So in one sense the coming of Jesus was like a great turning on of the kitchen light, and the men of his time by nature didn’t like it. The Pharisees in particular did not like having their deeds exposed for what they were – evil. They hated the way he revealed their hypocrisy, their greed, their lust. How he showed men that their exterior goodness was a whitewash, Jesus shone in a light on their souls, and showed men that they were like ornate tombs, pretty on the outside but inside ***“full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.”***

So all the opposition to Christ and the Gospel that we see in this book shouldn’t surprise us, it shouldn’t surprise us that when the Light came and revealed their evil, that they tried to extinguish the light. It shouldn’t surprise us that in our own day, men are still trying to extinguish the light and restore the darkness. Remember, Jesus doesn’t say, men *prefer* darkness, he says that men *loved* darkness. *The verb in verse 19 incidentally is agapao describing the strongest kind of Love, it’s the same word used to describe God’s love for the world in verse 16.*

They not only *love* the darkness, they *hate* the light. This is not a lukewarm dislike for the gospel, it is a positive hatred for it. You can see it in the way that, for instance, people industriously peddling atheism like Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett spend very little of their energy going after Islam, but are full of hate when it comes to Christianity. For instance, most of you will be aware by now that Phillip Pullman’s “Golden Compass” has been released as a family film. Pullman’s agenda is simple, he hates God, hates, Christ, and hates the church and wanted to create a series of books that would teach children to do the same, as Pullman said to the Sydney Morning Post, ***“My books are about killing God.”*** He hated C.S. Lewis’ *Narnia* series and set out to create the anti-Narnia. In his works, all authority is bad, anyone who believes in God is evil, lying is good, and so on. God is not the Creator, He is the villain, and Satan is the hero. If ever there was an example of hating the light and loving the darkness. It’s Pullman’s *“His Dark Materials”* series.

But I don’t need to look to Pullman for examples of that hatred of the light and love of the darkness. I only need look to my own life, I know what Christ is talking about here from personal experience. I hated the light, I hated Christ and Christianity, and I loved the darkness so much so that I venerated evil men like the Occultist Aleister Crowley.

My deeds were dark because I had a heart of darkness. And oh how I hated what God’s word said, because it condemned my deeds not as good but as evil. It exposed my hypocrisy and that made me angry. And my hate of light and love of darkness told the story of my soul’s condition. As Gordon Keddie put it ***“What people do, how they choose to live – all as measured against the standard of God’s revealed will – tells the story of their deepest commitments. Opposition to the light, not ignorance of it, is why people do what they do.”***

Perhaps someone you know or even you yourself are also filled with anger about what the Light of God’s word says about your deeds. Perhaps you are trying to convince yourself that you or let us say

that person you know really is good, maybe really even a Christian even though they hate what God's word says about the deeds they love and do. Hear then what Christ says elsewhere:

Luke 6:43 " For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.

44 "For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.

45 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Friends, you do no good to anyone when you fool yourself either about the state of your own heart or the state of others. Bad fruits come from bad trees. Evil deeds find their source in darkened hearts. Generally speaking no man on the broad path that leads to destruction thinks that he will end up in Hell, because his understanding is darkened, blinded. Paul put it this way, ***2 Cor. 4: 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.***

His wording was deliberate there, because like me, Paul had been blinded, he was a hater of Christ and persecutor of the church, until the glory of Christ literally illuminated him, shone all around him on the Damascus road and made clear even to him that his deeds were evil. But in order to be saved, his nature needed to be changed, he needed to be born again, regenerated, and the blindness of his heart removed. Without that supernatural work he would never have come to Christ as Jesus said John 6:44 ***"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."***

But what a change comes with that change of heart that God does! When you have been effectually called and brought to faith in Christ, you find that the darkness you once loved, you now hate and the light you once hated you now love. Your deeds, or fruit changes dramatically, because the tree that was once bad is now good.

Speaking of trees, I remember when I was hiking out in Arizona many years ago seeing a little pine tree that had grown at an almost diagonal angle. The seed had fallen into a cleft in a rock under an overhang, and the sun only shone into that cleft at a little bit at a certain angle. The seedling after it sprouted had sought out the light and grown at the exact angle that it came in at. Although that seedling had been born in a very dark place, it had grown towards the light that gave it life so much so that its entire being was shaped by it.

True Christians, brothers and sisters are the same way. We are born again in the midst of a very dark world, but because our natures have been changed they instinctively move towards the light, we grow in it, we shun the darkness. We desire our deeds to be clearly seen. That is one of the reasons why there should be such transparency, "sonlight" in the Christian community. And brothers and sisters, if you have deeds you don't desire to come to light, that is usually a sure sign that it is not done in God. As Brownlow North cautioned ***If you are in doubt as to a thing being right or wrong, go to your room and kneel down and ask God's blessing on it. (Col. 3:17). If you cannot do this, it is wrong. (Roms. 16:23).***

The good news is that if you have come to Christ, this is sure evidence that God's spirit has been at work in you, because in your natural state like the cockroaches in the kitchen you would shun the light

and flee from it. Only if your heart has been changed will you come at all and you will no more dwell in darkness, but united to Christ you will no more dwell in darkness, but live in the light forever. John 12:46 "I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.

Therefore we might say there are three signs that show that you have left the darkness and come into to the light, 1) A Conviction of Sin and Inability to Save Yourself 2) Faith and Trust in Christ Alone, and 3) a New Life of Good Deeds done in Christ. We go over them whenever someone becomes part of church. I'm going to read them again in your hearing, and I would ask you young and old to test yourselves and answer honestly, not out loud:

1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?

2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?

If your honest answer to all of those questions was yes, then you have come into the light and eternal life is your inheritance. Rejoice in that salvation that God has given to you as a free gift. If the answer is no, understand that it because you to quote Calvin "*prefer darkness to light, and refuse the light which is freely offered to [you], and because that hatred of the light arises only from a mind that is wicked and conscious of its guilt*" You may deny that, you may say, "what you call light, I call darkness" so too did the men of Christ's day, but remember what the Lord says of men who do not agree with the testimonies of his word "***If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.***"(Isa. 8:20) and he pronounces "***Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!***" Isaiah 5:20

Listen to the testimony of one who lived long under that condemnation himself and turn now to the light, know that there is nothing good in the darkness, and that Christ warns you that a life lived in darkness now, leads to eternity in what Christ called the "outer darkness" of hell. O sinner, listen to a sinner saved by Grace, why will you perish? Why will you perish in the darkness when the Sun of Righteousness has arisen With healing in His wings. Run to Him!