

6 LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

THIS LESSON WILL FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

Objective 1. Indicate the spiritual and moral condition of this world.

Objective 2. Show how faith creates light in the darkness.

Man lives in the dark and even his nuclear flashlight cannot pierce it. We not only live in the dark, we get used to it. There is a slow, subtle, sinister brainwashing process going on and by it we are gradually being desensitized to evil. Little by little, sin is made to appear less sinful until the light within us becomes darkness—and how great is that darkness! (Havner 1964)

The following Scriptures speak to the importance of light in this world's darkness.

“You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness” (1 Thessalonians 5:5).

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14–16)

“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13–14).

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. (John 3:19–21)

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the light of the world (John 1:5–9, 3:19–21, 8:12, 9:5, 12:46). Those who reject the light remain in spiritual darkness, as they cannot see the truth and are inclined toward works of moral darkness. Read the following excerpt of Paul’s encounter with the Lord:

“I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’”

“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.” (Acts 26:15–20)

Christ is the only exit out of this dark cave. There are many paths in the darkness, but the only one that leads to the light of Christ is the unchanging Gospel message which proclaims Him as the only savior for all times and peoples (John 14:6, Acts 4:12). Belief and repentance are necessary steps to receiving this light.

He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. (Acts 16:30–32)

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38).

This light reveals the truth to the enlightened. Biblical faith believes the specific, doctrinal teachings found in the Bible, disbelieving all contrary dogma. Genuine faith is like a light socket in a lamp that fits only one, unique, gospel bulb. Paul writes, “Since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Paul writes, “Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place” (Ephesians 6:14). The inward flooding of God’s light makes believers children of light (1 Thessalonians 5:5). They can walk in the light (1 John 1:7) since they are no longer slaves to the works of darkness (Ephesians 5:8). When one believes the gospel by faith, he or she receives life-changing grace (Ephesians 2:8) which works by love (Galatians 5:6). The believer then becomes a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17) who loves God and other people. Real faith receives the real God who changes people (James 2:17–26).

Those who have been enlightened are then privileged to shine as lights in the darkness that others may also see the truth and walk in the light. This shining involves both the believing and living aspects of faith. Believers show the world Christ in them by the new way they live (Matthew 5:16, 2 Corinthians 6:14) and they declare the enlightening message which leads to salvation for all who believe (Luke 8:16, Acts 26:23, Romans 10:13–17). Followers of Christ take on a leadership role in this world, daring to be different, to go out in front and point the path to those who are still in darkness even if those in darkness sometimes resent the implication that they are lacking something in their lives. The light must not be hidden since there is no other (Matthew 5:14–15).

Many years ago, while vacationing in the mountains, my wife and I found ourselves on a rough path in the woods with no flashlight and not enough time to get back to the road before nightfall. A pair of helpful young men joined us on the path, going before us with their flashlights. They were not ashamed of the fact that they had light which we did not, nor were they timid in showing us the way. Thankfully, they did not extinguish their lights in a misguided effort to avoid embarrassing us or

to identify with our condition. Those who are lost in the darkness need guides who are unashamed of their light (Mark 8:38, Romans 1:16).

A Christian is a guide rather than a follower of others—including postmodern people—who does not conform to unbiblical thinking or conduct. When one repents and follows Christ, he or she is no longer premodern, modern, or postmodern. Believers become aliens and strangers in this world who belong to a higher kingdom. The believer who receives salvation functions as a luminary to the surrounding culture. The light (message) remains the same regardless of the surroundings even though the shape of the lamp (methodologies) may be altered to better fit the setting.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Romans 10:14).

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

The attitude we are here investigating is seen in its most insidious form when it attempts to cloud men's reasoning by a fog of so-called 'charity.' The idea is cultivated in some quarters that any individual's declared attachment to a specific doctrine is an affront to all those who happen not to accept the doctrine. In the name of charity and tolerance we are discouraged from openly proclaiming any clearly formulable beliefs at all ... The idea that Christian charity consists in not expressing opinions with which other men may disagree is tenderly cherished in some quarters, but it is fatal to a rational faith. (Blamires 1956, 57)

TO HELP YOU LEARN

Please answer the following questions in the space provided below or in your notebook.

1. Do you believe God can communicate understandable, objective truth in the Bible?

2. Is it possible that some people are right and others are wrong?

3. Have you found absolute truth and certainty?

4. Would you be ashamed to be different from the majority if the majority were wrong?

5. If you had truth that others' lives depended on, would you spare any effort to tell them?

CONCLUSION

The answer to our original question is a resounding “yes!” We really can know absolute, life-changing truth. This truth is in Christ and the Bible. All of us must at some time seek Him for ourselves. No one can do this for us and we must not let a sense of unworthiness stop us from this seeking because we are all unworthy. Christ died for sinners, those who are His enemies (Romans 5:6–8). His death on the Cross makes it possible for any of us to seek and know Him. Once He lives in us He changes us so that we can live according to the absolutes of His kingdom. We can escape from the cave and experience a whole new world—not the fantasy, foundationless world of Aladdin—but the brilliant world of God’s wonderful truth and life.

After my saving encounter with God I was surprised to find that there were whole buildings full of people who had repented and come to know Him through Christ just as I had. Becoming part of a local body of believers (a church) was vital to my continuing spiritual life and growth. There is a body of believers waiting for you to join with them in worshipping and serving God. I highly recommend an Assemblies of God church if there is one in your area. Those of us who have given our lives to Christ have found the journey of following Him to be exciting and challenging. Join us as we follow Him together and seek to live out His kingdom community in this postmodern world.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Have you sought God with a sincere heart?
2. Do you know Him and believe His message of salvation?
3. Have you sought out a church to attend?
4. Have you been reading the Bible?
5. Have you shared the gospel truth with others?