

Text: John 1:4-9

Title: "God's light vs. our darkness"

Time: 3/12/2023 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: On the first day of creation, God said, "Let there be light, and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). When He did so, He created a kind of energy that is foundational to the universe. Light is God's tool that enables healthy eyes to see and interact with the time-space continuum we call the universe.

The speed of light is a cosmological constant of our universe, measured at just over 186M miles per second. Light from the sun keeps our earth warm enough for us to live here, produces the weather patterns we experience, and begins the amazing process of photosynthesis in plants. Light that is visible to us is but a very small piece of the spectrum of electromagnetic radiation that God created.

Writing about the creation of light in Gen. 1:3, the creation scientist Henry Morris explained the verse this way: "All the types of force and energy which interact in the universe involve only electromagnetic, gravitational, and nuclear forces; all of these had now been activated. Though no doubt oversimplified, this tremendous creative act of the Godhead might be summarized by saying that the nuclear forces maintaining the integrity of matter were activated by the Father when He created the elements of the space-mass-time continuum, the gravitational forces were activated by the Spirit when He brought form and motion to the initially static and formless matter, and the electromagnetic forces were activated by the Word [God's Son; see John 1:1] when He called light into existence out of darkness" [*The Genesis Record*, 56].

The *Encyclopedia Britannica*'s article on light notes, "No single answer to the question 'What is light?' satisfies the many contexts in which light is experienced, explored, and [employed]" [[www.britannica.com/science/light](http://www.britannica.com/science/light)]. As we read the Gospel of John, we come to realize that this Gospel is also one of these many contexts in which light is experienced, explored, and [employed].

John's favorite word for light is *phōs*, a Greek word from which we get our words *photograph* and *photon*. The noun occurs 70 times in our New Testament, 32 of these in John's writings (45.7%). John's Gospel mentions light 23 times. Acts places second with only ten occurrences. John has much to say about the thing we call *light*.

The verb *phaneroō* means *to make visible*, and John uses it 23 times (just like *phōs*), which is about 40% of the times in the New Testament. In our passage this morning, he uses synonyms for this key word, *phainō*, meaning *to shine* (1:5) and *phōtizō*, meaning *to enlighten* (1:9).

What is unique about John's context for the experience, exploration, and employment of light is that it is not focused on the light God created at the beginning of creation, but rather John focuses on the one who made that light (John 1:3). As we survey what John has to say about Light, we must begin with the truth that John's Light must be spelled with a capital L.

In addition, John's interest in Light normally highlights its contrast with darkness. For John, all of reality can be described as a contest between God's light and man's darkness (v. 5). I want us to notice three simple truths from what John's Gospel says about God's light in conflict with our darkness.

I. God's light is Jesus Christ (vv. 4, 9).

Illustration: A couple of weeks ago, I was in Ohio for the ACCC officers' meetings. Pastor Dan Greenfield hosts those meetings, and this year he found a great rental deal on a beautiful large colonial home we obtained very inexpensively for the three days.

One of the complexities of the home, however, were its many light switches. Learning how to turn the lights on meant finding the right light switch among the many choices, and this always took a good bit of effort at first.

Application: The Lord Jesus spoke about the importance knowing how to turn the light on and how to keep the light on when it comes to our time in this dark world:

John 11:9-10, "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth because there is no light in him."

The Lord's analogy is clear as day. As we live our lives in this dark place, we can do so either in daylight or in the darkness of night. If we walk with the benefit of daylight, we will not stumble. If we are walking in the darkness of night, we can be sure to fall. So we need the light on as we live our lives in this dark world.

The Gospel of John leaves no doubt about where that light is and how to turn it on:

John 1:4, "In him [the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (v. 14)] was life; and the life was the light of men."

John 1:9, "That [the Word – Jesus Christ] was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

John 8:12, "Then spake Jesus again unto them saying, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'"

John 9:5, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

John 12:46, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

And so, John tells us that Jesus claimed to be the true Light of the world. Our translation in 1:9 indicates that He enlightens every man who has ever been born, but a better interpretation is followed by some more recent versions, "That was the true Light, which enlightened every man by coming into the world." The point is the teaching of verse 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Jesus is the light of the world, because when He came into the world He provided the light of salvation to every man in the world. Have we seen this light? We live in a dark world, but it is possible to live in our dark world with great light if we believe that Jesus is that Light. God's promise is that when we embrace Jesus as our light by faith, "whosoever believes on [Him] shall not abide in darkness."

Is Jesus your Light in this dark world? Have you believed on Him to save you from the darkness of your sin? Many have not, and that brings us to our second theme this morning about God's light versus our darkness.

II. Our darkness hates God's light (v. 5).

Illustration: What do bats, opossums, raccoons, and owls have in common? They are all examples of nocturnal animals. Nocturnal animals are those that sleep during the daytime and are awake at night. Their nature prefers the darkness of nighttime over the light of day.

Application: John tells us that Jesus taught us that human nature is nocturnal in a spiritual sense. Jesus is God's Light, but we prefer to close our eyes to Him and live life in our darkness instead:

John 3:19-21, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."

Jesus said these words to Nicodemus, and it seems as though this ruler of the Jews came to understand the way human nature, his own included, naturally hates God's Light, Jesus Christ. In John 7:43-52, Nicodemus finds himself surprised at the Christ-hatred he perceived in others.

John 12:35, "Then Jesus said unto them ["the people" of v. 34], Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

Jesus's warning in 12:35, "lest darkness come upon you," uses the same verb we have in 1:5, "and the darkness comprehended it not." The Greek word means literally *to take down*, and it means *to comprehend* at times in the sense we mean when we say that "we have got the study material down." But it more often means *to take down* in the sense of

*to overcome* or *to destroy* something. When it comes to the battle between darkness and light in our lives, 12:35 warns us that our darkness can take us down, overcome us, and destroy us.

And what 1:5 tells us is that this darkness could never do that to God's Light, the Lord Jesus Christ. It certainly tried. The dark member of the twelve betrayed Him; the dark authorities brought their lanterns and torches and weapons to arrest Him; the dark false-witnesses at His trial lied about Him; the dark Roman procurator who knew better failed to protect Him; and the dark angry mob was not satisfied until they had crucified Him.

But in the end, the Light shown in darkness, and the darkness could not overthrow it. Jesus arose from the tomb, defeated the darkness of sin and death and Satan, and offers that same triumphant victory of salvation to all who will come to the Light and trust Him for that free gift of grace. Jesus prayed for the dark angry mob, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and thousands of them were forgiven fifty days later on the Day of Pentecost.

He prays the same for you and for me. He sees that our darkness will overcome and destroy us unless we have His light. Will you remain in the darkness, hating the Light, because your deeds are evil? Or will God's Light, Jesus Christ, become your salvation?

III. God's light must become our light (vv. 6-8).

Application: Our passage refers to John the Baptist, who was a witness to the Light of Jesus Christ. In fulfilling Scripture as the promised forerunner of Christ, John's witness affects us all – "that all men through him [John the Baptist]

might believe" (v. 7). John believed, and John became what Jesus would call "a burning and a shining light" as a witness to the Light of the world (5:35).

John the Baptist is our example in this regard:

John 3:21, "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." Nicodemus came to be known as the ruler of the Jews who helped embalm and bury the body of Jesus (John 19:39).

John 9:3, "Jesus answered, Neither hath this man [the man born blind] sinned nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest [visible] in him." The man born blind would be expelled from the synagogue because he affirmed that Jesus was from God and had healed him.

John 12:36, "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

God's Light must be our Light. He becomes our Light when we come to Him, are healed by Him, believe in Him, and openly confess Him as our Lord and Savior before a dark world. When we become God's lights, the light of the Light, what we call Christlikeness, shines from our lives. If we become that, Jesus may refer to us too one day as one of His burning and shining lights.

Conclusion: Is that who we are becoming this morning? Is this what has happened to us? Or are we walking in darkness, hiding from the Light because our deeds are evil?

Think of how powerful the sun is as the light source for our planet. Around 27 million degrees Fahrenheit at its core and roughly 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit on its surface, the sun is powerful enough to turn the earth into a pile of ash instantly.

And yet the Creator had other plans for this amazingly powerful light source. He put it about 93MM miles from earth, so that rather than turning our forests into kindling, its light gives our planet life through photosynthesis. It warms us just enough to ripen our tomatoes at the right time of year.

Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, is also known to Scripture as the Sun of Righteousness who rises each morning with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2). Though powerful enough to destroy everything, God's Light chose instead to destroy only our darkness, giving us just enough Light so that we might be saved.

Our world would be dark and dead without the Light of the sun, and our lives are the same way until we ask the Light of the Sun of Righteousness to come in to be our Lord and Savior.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*