
JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

GOD'S OVERWHELMING LIGHT

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on January 8, 2017

INTRODUCTION

The “light” of God is symbolic of His purity, truth, blessings, and presence. Some people seem to believe that God’s presence may be enjoyed without His purity, or that His blessings may be possessed without His truth. The Bible teaches that God’s light is overwhelming. It exposes wickedness, illumines darkness, condemns to death, and produces life. There is no one who is able to escape God’s light, but some receive it with humble gladness. Those who are the children of God are born from Him, as miraculous glimmers from His spectacular brilliance.

JOHN 1:6-13

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

THE POINT I’M AIMING AT TODAY:

God’s light is overwhelming, exposing darkness and bringing life.

MESSAGE OUTLINE:

(1) THE GOSPEL WRITER'S EVANGELISTIC MOTIVE: WITNESS TO CHRIST

(2) THE TRUE LIGHT EXPOSES EVERYONE

(3) SOME EXPOSED AS CHILDREN

(4) GOD MAKES LIGHTLINGS FROM DARK THINGS

MESSAGE

(1) THE GOSPEL WRITER'S EVANGELISTIC MOTIVE: WITNESS TO CHRIST

*"6 There was a man **sent from God**, whose name was **John**. 7 He came as a **witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him...**"
(v6-7)*

- John (the Gospel writer) is deeply interested in "bearing witness" to the person and work of Christ
 - John (the Gospel writer) offers **multiple witnesses** to Christ
 - **Jesus' works** "**bear witness... that the Father has sent**" Him (5:36).
 - "**the Father... has Himself borne witness**" about Jesus Christ (5:37).
 - "**the Scriptures... bear witness**" about Jesus (5:39).
 - Jesus "[bore] witness about [Himself]" (8:12, 18:37).
 - "**The crowd that had been with [Jesus] when He called Lazarus out of the tomb**" bore witness about Him (12:17).
 - "**the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father**" bears witness to Jesus Christ (15:26).
 - **Jesus' disciples** "**will bear witness**" to Christ (15:27).
 - **John** (the Gospel writer) himself bears witness to Christ (19:35, 21:24).

- John (the Gospel writer) offers John (the Baptist) as his first ‘witness’

Nugget: Matthew (3:1), Mark (6:14, 24), and Luke (3:2) refer to John the Baptist as “**John the Baptist**” or “**John the son of Zechariah.**” John (the Gospel writer) does not. He just calls him “**John.**” Many have seen this as evidence that John “**the beloved disciple**” is in fact the author of this Gospel. Since he never refers to himself (or only with some vague references), and since he sees no need to differentiate one John from another, he must be John the beloved disciple of Christ.

- John “**came as a witness, to bear witness** about the light, [so] that all **might believe through him**” (v7).
 - An important aside: A “**witness**” is what he came “**as**”
 - His identity is: he “**is a witness**” *to Christ*.
 - This is an interesting point because of what we know about John.
 - His **preaching platform** was “**the wilderness**” (Matt. 3:1).
 - His **wardrobe** was one long shirt, made of camel hair (Matt. 3:4).
 - His **primary meal** was locusts and honey (Matt. 3:4).
 - His only **message** was, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**” (Matt. 3:2)! Which means, “**Turn from your evil ways, and beg God for forgiveness, because He is coming to judge you!**”
 - **After playing his important role** as Christ’s first earthly human witness, **John was murdered** at the request of a brutal king’s niece (Matt. 14:10-11).

- By all worldly measurements, John was an utter failure.
 - But, John's identity was not in worldly success; it was in Christ.
- John "**came to bear witness about the light**" (v8).
 - "**John bore witness about [Christ]**" saying, "*This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me'*" (v15).
 - John "**testified**" that he "**was not the Christ**" (v19-20), but he also testified that "**the Christ**" had come to live "**among them**" (v26-27).
 - John witnessed to Christ by announcing "**Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**" when he saw Jesus approaching (v29).
 - John said, "**I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God**" (v34).

Major Point: God's light is overwhelming.

1. The ample testimony concerning Christ is overwhelming.
2. AND, Christ came into the world as an overwhelming light.

Think of it:

- Jesus never sounds like one *struggling for power*
- Jesus always acts from a posture of *supreme authority and strength*
- Jesus *exposes wickedness in the deepest darkness* (i.e. sinfulness in the false piety of the religious leaders)

(2) THE TRUE LIGHT EXPOSES EVERYONE

“The true light, *which gives light to everyone*, was coming into the world” (v9)

- We have two options here as to the meaning of “light”
 - **One**, John means to say that “the true light” (i.e. Christ), which gives **SAVING LIGHT to everyone**, “was coming into the world.”
 - If we adopt this understanding, then John is arguing here that all people have received or will receive “Saving Light”
 - “Saving Light” (I suppose) would at the very least be a *hearing of the Gospel of Christ*.
 - However, we know that not everyone saw the person and work of Christ during His earthly ministry; and many people die in every generation without ever having heard the Gospel.
 - **Two**, John means to say that “the true light” (i.e. Christ), which gives **GENERAL LIGHT to everyone**, “was coming into the world.”
 - This understanding seems quite in line with what John teaches elsewhere, and with what Paul teaches in his magnum opus (Romans).
 - John on General Light to everyone:
 - “light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light...” (3:19).
 - “everyone who does wicked things hates the light, and does not come to the light...” (3:20).
 - “believe in the light, that you may become sons of light” (12:36).
 - Jesus came into the world “as light, so that whoever believes in [Him] may not remain in darkness” (12:46).
 - John also wrote 3 letters (1, 2, and 3 John). In the first he picks up the theme of Light vs Darkness again (1 Jn. 1:5, 7; 2:8, 9).
 - Summary: People are naturally in darkness, but the light exposes them to truth, bringing transformation to those who respond with humble trust.

- Paul on General Light to everyone:
 - In Romans 1, Paul does not specifically refer to “light,” but he does speak of darkness and the rejection of God’s truth. If one allows the imagery of “light” to also connote “truth,” then the correlations fit perfectly.
 - Romans 1:19–21 – “19 what *can be known about God is plain* to them, because *God has shown it to them*. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, *have been clearly perceived*, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. *So they are without excuse*. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and *their foolish hearts were darkened*.”
 - Paul is reaching back to the beginning of creation, claiming that the “truth” or “light” of God has been seen by all humans.
 - However, we are wise to also consider the way in which Paul sees God’s OT law/word as “a” light to darkened people.
 - Paul calls the law of God “*a light to those who are in darkness*” (Rom. 2:19) and the “*embodiment of knowledge and truth*” (2:20).
 - But he condemns those who do not apply the truth of the law, saying, “*You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law*” (2:23).
 - Paul’s point is that the *General Light* of God comes to all people, and even the *Special Light* of God’s word/law comes to some sinners, but it often merely exposes darkness.

Major Point: God’s light is overwhelming, for it exposes darkness.

When you combine Paul’s writing in Romans (the OT law is “a light”) with what John says just after his climax statement of the prologue (“the law was

given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" [1:17]), then you begin to see what an overwhelming light God's light truly is.

God's law and the incarnation of God's Word are overwhelming light.

God's law, and Christ Himself, exposes darkness.

If your understanding of Christ does not include His piercing exposure of your darkness, then you have imagined Christ to be less than He is.

(3) SOME EXPOSED AS CHILDREN

"10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (v10-12)

- There is not time to delve into verses 10 and 11
 - **The irony and heartbreak of verse 10:** Though God the Son made the world and came into the world, the world remained estranged from Him...
 - **The horrifying nature of verse 11:** God the Son came to "His own" (stuff, abode, people), and yet His created things did not want Him near...
- We shall focus on the beauty, sobriety, and wonder of verse 12
 - **First, the Beauty:**
 - The beauty of verse 12 is that, despite the horrifying nature of verse 11, **there are some "who did receive Him, who believed in His name"!**
 - If we make ourselves virgin readers of this text, we may get to verse 11 and expect that what comes next is only fiery judgment.
 - The true God, in His plurality of persons, has created all that is... God shines the light of His truth upon the darkness of His creation, and the darkness cannot compete... God sends one man (John) to be a witness

to the light, and everyone is exposed to it... **BUT, no one knew the light... and no one received the light!?**

- The whole world, as it were, chose sides against the light!
- Oh, what beauty there is then that it was not “no one” who received Him! It was not “no one” who believed in His name!

- **Second, the Sobriety:**
 - The sobering reality of verse 12 is that **not all are “*children of God*”**
 - While the sting of this may sting indeed, it cannot be any clearer from this passage.
 - “*receiving Him*” and “*believing in His name*” are essential accompaniments to being called “*children of God*” (v12).
 - This is the clear testimony of Scripture generally.
 - Paul says that it is ***those who believe the promise*** of God to save that are the “**children of God**” (Rom. 9:8).
 - Paul says that “**children of God**” are “**as lights**” in a dark and “**crooked**” world (Phil. 2:15)
 - John says that “**children of God**” show themselves to be such when they “**love God and obey His commands**” (1 Jn. 5:2).
 - John says elsewhere that the whole of humanity is ***divided into two groups***, “**children of God**” and “**children of the devil**” (1 Jn. 3:10).
 - There is no neutral (middle-of-the-road) category.
 - This is sobering because:
 - It reminds the Christian of our gracious status.
 - It reminds the unbeliever of his/her condition.
 - It reminds us of the dire need for evangelism.

○ **Third, the Wonder:**

- The wonder of verse 12 is that **some are called “*children of God*”**
 - What a wondrous status!
 - 1 Jn. 2:28-3:2 – “**28 And now, *little children, abide in him*, so that when he appears we may have confidence and *not shrink from him in shame* at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. 3:1 *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.* The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2 Beloved, we are God’s children now**, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but ***we know that when he appears we shall be like him***, because we shall see him as he is.”
 - How do you know you are in right relationship with God?
 - Because He loves you as a perfect Father!
 - How do you know you shall not be removed from this status?
 - Because you are His child!
 - How do you know that you will be like Him?
 - Because He has promise to make all His children look like Christ!**
- **IF the beauty** of verse 12 is that some people do “**receive Him**” and “**believe on His name**,”
- **AND the sobriety** of verse 12 is that “**child of God**” is not our natural condition or situation,
- **AND the wonder** of verse 12 is that lovers of darkness become lovers of light, or children of the devil become children of God
- **THEN** we must ask the question, “**How in the world can this be?**”

(4) GOD MAKES LIGHTLINGS FROM DARK THINGS

“children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (v13)

- The Bible is Full of Imagery
 - **Salvation is Redemption** – buying the slavish sinner’s freedom at great cost
 - **Salvation is Justification** – simultaneously transferring the legally-earned righteousness of Christ and the legally-deserved penalty for sin
 - **Salvation is Regeneration** – re-creating or making a new person, with new desires, new affections, and new constitutions
 - **Salvation is Resurrection** – once dead in sin, the corpse is raised to new and eternal life
- The Imagery of Rebirth
 - **Salvation is Rebirth** – all are naturally born, but those who love and trust the Savior are born again
 - This imagery is further described and discussed in John 3, so we will consider it more deeply when we get to that passage, but let us make note of a few things here:
 - Rebirth (like all the other metaphorical language of conversion) is God’s doing!
 - God redeems...
 - God justifies...
 - God regenerates...
 - God resurrects...
 - The passage could not be clearer:
 - **The birthing of God’s children** (i.e. the doing of “rebirth”) is
 - “**not of blood** [Ethnicity; ‘bloods’ assuming the mixture of blood from father and mother]
 - **nor of the will of the flesh** [Sexual Desire; this is spiritual, not natural]

- ***nor of the will of man*** [Human Purposes; as a husband may purposefully attempt to conceive a child with his wife],
- ***but of God*** [entirely God’s doing]”¹
- Rebirth (like all the other metaphorical language of conversion) connotes an ***utter break from the past***
- Rebirth signifies ***new life, different life, abundant life***
- ***Rebirth is adoption*** (only spiritual adoption is better than our earthly examples)
 - *God makes Lightlings from Dark Things*
- Lightlings from Dark things
 - Children of God are not merely dark things with light shining upon them
 - Children of God are not “part dark thing” and “part lightling”
 - Children of God are not ever going to be dark things again.

Major Point: God’s light is overwhelming, exposing darkness and bringing life.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Commentary on the Passage by Augustine

<http://orthodoxchurchfathers.com/fathers/npnf106/npnf1097.htm>

Open Heart for the Great Savior by C.H. Spurgeon

<http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols10-12/chs669.pdf>

How to Become a Child of God by John Piper

<http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-to-become-a-child-of-god>

¹“Some have argued that faith (v. 12) is the logical and temporal *condition* of the new birth (1:13; e.g. Barrett, p. 164); others have argued precisely the reverse (e.g. Holtzmann, pp. 40–42). In fact, these verses refrain from spelling out the connection between faith and new birth. Those who receive the Word are identical with those who believe in his name, and they are identical with those who are born of God (cf. further discussion in Carson, pp. 181–182).”

Barrett C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and notes on the Greek Text* (SPCK, ²1978).

Holtzmann H. J. Holtzmann, *Evangelium, Briefe und Offenbarung des Johannes* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], ³1908).

Carson D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension* (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1981).

Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 126). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.