

Come into the Light

John 3:19-21

John has said that the one who does not believe in Jesus Christ is already condemned. Here he is showing the cause of that imminent danger.

19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. **20** For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. **21** But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

I. The unbeliever is condemned because he avoids the light (19, 20)

This text specifically addresses the case of those who hear the gospel and reject it, but the judgment applies to those who do not hear but who by their sinful nature reject all that is good.

Every time we humans get a chance to prove ourselves, we fail. The presence of the Lord is not a pleasant thought to the unregenerate man. Look at Is. 53:6 and Rom.3:10,11

John 1:9-11: "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him."

a. His character: he prefers darkness (19)

John is saying here that the real judgment, the real crisis, is the revelation of man's character at the coming of Christ, the light of the world. We are by nature like bugs under a rock---when the rock is overturned, we scramble for the dark.

Nicodemus illustrates this principle by his coming to Jesus at night.

b. His motive: hiding his evil conduct (20)

The word here for "exposed" is the Greek word "elencho," which occurs 18 times in the NT, always meaning "convicted"; e.g. Eph.5:11,13.

We sometime wonder why the world is so hostile to the Evangelical Church. The unbeliever "hates the light." We must remember that if we are the light of the world (see Mt. 5:14), then we shall be hated, too.

A student of Socrates, Alcibiades, once said to his mentor: "Socrates, I hate you, for every time I meet you, you let me see what I am." This is why ministers vow that they are prepared to suffer loss for the sake of the gospel. This is why Christians should always expect persecution for their faithful witness.

II. The believer is saved because he comes to the light (21)

In John 8:12, Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

In I John 1:5-7, the Apostle teaches us that a genuine believer walks in the light: "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."

a. His character: he does the truth (21a)

The Scriptures teach us to seek the truth, learn the truth, tell the truth, proclaim the truth, but here to do the truth.

Now to do the truth, one must know the truth and love the truth.

What is the truth? It is the Lord Jesus Christ (14:6). In Ps. 27:1 David says: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

Ps. 112:1,4: "Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!... Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous."

(See Ps. 119:105)

b. His motive: displaying the grace of God (21b)

The believer understands that it is God Who has sovereignly and graciously transferred him from darkness to light. Paul says in Colossians 1:13,14: "13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

DA Carson says, "The lover of light is not some intrinsically superior person, ...but...(one who) longs to show that (his/her) deeds have been done through God."

In I Peter 2:9, Peter says: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Specifically His excellencies are His acts of grace to us:

When we were dead, He made us alive through birth from above;
When we had established an irrevocably damning performance record, He sent His Son to die for us;

When we rejected Him, He gave us the gifts of faith and repentance;
When we were alienated from Him, He adopted us as His own child;
When we had no hope of escaping His judgment, He promised us an eternal, glorious life with Him.

We walk in the light because we want the heavenly spotlight to shine on us so that all of heaven and earth will see God's magnificent work of grace in our lives.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the human race under a judgment of condemnation? How can we be delivered from that judgment?
2. Why does the unbeliever avoid the light of the gospel? What are the implications for us?
3. How does a genuine believer respond to the light of the gospel?
4. How should we respond when others mistreat us because of our faith in Christ? Why?
5. Why do you think John included these verses in his gospel account?

Going Deeper

1. Is there any area of your life in which you are avoiding the light of the gospel? Why? What can you do to come out into the light?
2. Is there an unbeliever with whom you have lost patience? What direction does this text give you for that relationship in the future?

