**New Hope Global Sermon – Jesus Calls Us to be the Light of the World**

**Introduction**

I was struck recently with a passage on light and darkness from John 3 and wondered if I had an illustration to open us with. Tony Evans provided it!:

One morning I got up at 3:30am and decided not to turn on the light. Now, there is a light right next to me on my nightstand, but I decided not to turn on the light. I figured that I knew my bedroom and knew where things were so I didn’t need the light. I figured I could make my own way in darkness, so I didn’t turn on the light. However, in the middle of the floor were some shoes I’d left out from the night before.

I don’t know how many times I’ve been told not to leave my shoes in the floor and to put them up. So there they were in the middle of the floor and I had no light so I didn’t see them sitting there. As far as I was concerned, there were no shoes in the middle of the floor and I was all right. I knew how many steps it would take before I had to turn right. I knew my room. I’d been living there for a lot of years.

A few minutes later, as I tried to pick myself off of the floor after stumbling, tripping, and doing James Brown all over the carpet, because I tripped over my shoes, I was reminded that when things are dark, you don’t see things as they really are. You may think you’re okay when you’re not okay. You may think you’re fine when you’re not fine. You may think you know what you’re doing when you don’t know what you are doing – all because you are trying to do your thing in the dark.

If I would have just turned the light on, I. . .wouldn’t have had to face all those problems because the light would have revealed something was wrong in the middle of the floor. (Tony Evans, Tony Evans’ Complete Book of Illustrations, Moody Press, 2009, p. 195)

**Darkness and Light in the New Testament**

The passage that caught my attention on light and darkness is from John 3:17-21

7“God did not send his Son into the world to judge and condemn the world, but to be its Savior and rescue it![[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A+17-21&version=TPT#fen-TPT-7506a)] 18So now there is no longer any condemnation for those who believe in him, but the unbeliever already lives under condemnation because they do not believe in the name of the only Son of God.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A+17-21&version=TPT#fen-TPT-7507b)] 19And here is the basis for their judgment: The Light *of God* has now come into the world, but the people loved darkness more than the Light, because they want the darkness to conceal their evil. 20So the wicked hate the Light and try to hide from it, for the Light fully exposes their lives. 21But those who love the truth[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A+17-21&version=TPT#fen-TPT-7510c)] will come into the Light, for the Light will reveal that it was God who produced their fruitful works.”[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A+17-21&version=TPT#fen-TPT-7510d)] Passion

John’s gospel has several references to this theme of light and darkness. He begins chapter one with: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God…The Word gave life to everything that was created,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+1%3A+4-6+&version=NLT#fen-NLT-26015a)]  and his life brought light to everyone. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.” Then, twice later in his gospel he includes Jesus’ claim: ‘I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life’ (Jn.8:12. See also Jn.9:5).

This light and darkness theme is also prevalent in Paul’s writings. In fact, Paul explains salvation to the Colossians in these terms: 13”God has rescued us completely from the tyrannical rule[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=col.1%3A+10-14&version=TPT#fen-TPT-10778c)] of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom realm of his beloved Son. 14For in the Son all our sins are canceled and we have the release of redemption *through his very blood*.” Paul uses that theme in his testimony to King Agrippa:

13While traveling on the road at noon, Your Highness, I saw a light brighter than the sun flashing from heaven all around me and those who were with me. 14We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice speaking to me in Aramaic, saying, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? You are only hurting yourself when you resist your calling.’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+26%3A14-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-9168a)] 15“I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ “And the Lord replied, ‘I am Jesus,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+26%3A14-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-9169b)] the one you are persecuting. 16Get up and stand to your feet, for I have appeared to you *to reveal your destiny and to commission you* as my assistant.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+26%3A14-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-9170c)] You will be a witness to what you have seen and to the things I will reveal whenever I appear to you.[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+26%3A14-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-9170d)] 17I will rescue you from the persecution of your own people and from the hostility of the other nations that I will send you to. 18And you will open their eyes to their true condition, so that they may turn from darkness to the Light[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+26%3A14-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-9172e)] and from the power[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+26%3A14-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-9172f)] of Satan to the power of God. By placing their faith in me they will receive the total forgiveness[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+26%3A14-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-9172g)] of sins and be made holy, *taking hold of the inheritance that I give to my children*!’

**Darkness as understood by Christians**

If you became a Christian as an adult from a non-Christian background, as I have, you likely have a personal understanding of living under ‘the dominion of darkness.’ It was your normal context. Once you saw it as evil, then the word ‘delivered’ makes heart-sense. Experiencing that darkness is often what has propelled adults to turn to Jesus. You also understand, better than most, the power of the gospel truth that Jesus as the Light of the world will push back the darkness for believers.

But I think many Christians’ understanding of darkness minimizes it, or we feel it does not refer to us. However, if we are continuing in a known sin, the darkness is the willing blindness of rationalistic justification of our behavior. Eventually, we don’t even see the displeasure of God in what we are condoning. God’s response to that is clear in I John 1: 6 and 8: “If we claim to have fellowship with God yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth…If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Jeremiah explains this problem as a heart problem: “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9).

Or, we view the darkness as the more blatant sins of others – either those outside Christ’s family or those who call themselves Christians but have fallen morally and been exposed. Still others think we know the dangers of darkness by God’s standards and so don’t ask the Spirit to turn on the light to expose our own “hidden or presumptuous sins.” As Ps. 19:12-13 says: “Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.” We need to pray Ps. 139:23-24: “Search me, O God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Now back to Tony Evan’s illustration.

As Evans discovered, denial or blame-shifting or rationalistic thinking or pride in our understanding of these issues is an unwise move on our part. We NEED the Spirit’s spotlight to help us see the dangers ahead of us we had not counted on. We NEED the Spirit to search us and reveal our own encroaching familiarity with thoughts, words and deeds that displease God. And we NEED the Spirit to open our eyes to Satan’s tactics to steal, kill or destroy believers and then claim the power of Jesus’ deliverance from all these tactics. Jesus has overcome the darkness and will push back the darkness that surrounds us, if we ask and claim his power. Resisting darkness is one important aspect of spiritual warfare. (Eph. 6).

Beloved, darkness has an engulfing power to control even Christians. We are NOT safe in the dark.

**Christ’s Deliverance**

So, let’s reaffirm the good news of the gospel: God HAS delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of Light in Jesus Christ. We can be cleansed from our sins and walk with Him and others in fellowship. I John 1:7: “ If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.” V. 9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” That “all” in both verses is the sin we do not recognize as well as the sins we confess. Through Christ we are given His righteousness in place of our “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). He is Light and gives us the Spirit within to empower us to walk in the light as He is in the light. We are no longer under condemnation; we are made by Christ to be the light of the world. Eugene Peterson paraphrases Christ’s words in Mt.5:14-16 this way:

14-16“You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.”

That’s the promise and the challenge, beloved. We need to avoid any form of darkness in how we choose our priorities, how we manage our thoughts, how we control our bodies and how we feed our souls. We need to ask Jesus to make us His light that affects those choices. And we can be His light because God promises to work in us, (with our cooperation, of course), “to will and act according to his good purpose. . . .[He can make us] pure and blameless, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life” (Phil. 2: 13, 15-16). May it be so.

Prayer: Dear Lord, let your light so shine through us that our lives reflect You and Your power to push back the darkness for those who trust You. Then help us share this wonderful good news with others. Amen.

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