

## INTRODUCTION

We all know people who are not too bright. I've decided I don't pick on Aggies and I don't pick on Longhorns or even Baylor Bears, so today I guess I'll make all the Razorback fans mad. There were two Razorbacks who had heard about a \$50 all-inclusive cruise just for Razorback fans. So, one of them said, "I'm going to check it out." He went down there and saw the sign, "Cruise, \$50 for Razorback fans." He walked in, laid down his \$50 and the guy hit him over the head with a stick and knocked him out. The next thing he knew, he woke up floating on an inner tube in a farm pond. That was the cruise. Beside him was another Razorback fan. He turned to him and he asked, "Do they serve food on this cruise?" and the guy said, "They didn't last year."

We have expressions for people who aren't very bright. We say, "They aren't the brightest bulb in the box." But when it comes to sharing truth, God is no respecter of persons. He gives His truth and light out freely to everyone regardless of their I.Q. It just depends on whether you're listening or not.

Jesus just finished sharing the parable of how people hear the Word of God. Some have hard hearts, and the Word is stolen. Some have shallow hearts where the Word is starved. Some have crowded hearts where the Word is strangled by worries and the deceitfulness of wealth. But some have open hearts and the Word is multiplied thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold.

Jesus continues to teach about how important it is to really hear God's Word. This particular passage can be confusing because it sounds similar to something Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. He said, "You don't put a lamp under a bowl, you put it on a stand so everyone can see it." Then He said, "Let your light shine before men." In this passage He will use a parable of a lamp, but He isn't talking about our testimony. He is referring to how the light of His truth can't be hidden.

Mark 4:21-25. "He said to them, 'Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Consider carefully what you hear,' he continued. 'With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.'

We know that this is a mini-parable in itself so skip down to Mark 4:33-34:

"With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything."

In the Bible, light and truth are two sides of the same coin. They always go together. Our prayer should be the one found in Psalm 43:3 which says, "O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling." (NRSV)

When someone is sworn into a court of law they are asked to swear that they will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I've always smiled when I hear the phrase, "the whole truth." Because no one except God knows "the whole truth." Only God does. We only know the truth that has been revealed to us at any given time.

God has all the truth. And we'd like to have all of His truth at one time, but He loves us too much to download all His truth into our tiny brains at once. There's not enough space in the hard drive that is our brain. If truth is light, to receive all of God's truth at one time would be like looking directly into the sun at noon day. We couldn't handle it. In fact there is a fascinating poem about this by Georgia Galbraith entitled, "White Revelations." "To human eyes, too much of light / Is blinding as the blackest night. / And this is so, too, of the mind, / In total ignorance it's blind. / But more truth than it can absorb; / Will overwhelm the mental orb. / So, lest our vision burn to ashes; / God shows us truth in bits and flashes, / White revelations that the brain; / Can comprehend and yet stay sane. / And we, poor fools, demand truth's noon; / Who scarce can bear its crescent moon."

I've been a serious follower of Jesus for over five decades now and if there's one thing I've learned it is that God continues to reveal His truth to me. I will always be a student of the Word of God. He keeps giving me more light and more truth. Is that your attitude? Or do you consider yourself a know-it-all Believer? Keep learning. God wants to give you more light and truth even today.

## **I. GOD'S LIGHT: GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO EVERY PERSON**

Jesus said, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." (John 12:46)

Every person on the planet has some light, or truth, about God. If you're thinking, "Well, no, that's not true because not everybody has access to a Bible, not everybody has access to a church and they can't hear preaching," I want to do a little role playing at this time. I'd like for all of you in the congregation to imagine you are a person who has lived your life never reading a Bible, never hearing the gospel, never even have access to a Bible and you die and stand before God, and you say, "Whoa, wait a minute, God. I need an excuse. My excuse is nobody ever told me about you." The Bible refutes this excuse: "What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." (Romans 1:19-20)

If this was a court of law and you claimed to be innocent of hearing about God, we could call to the witness stand two universal witnesses to testify, "I told you about God." Who are these two witnesses?

### **A. God's outer witness is Creation**

God's first universal witness is Creation. Creation takes the stand and says to everybody on the face of the earth. "Listen, if you paid attention, I was telling you all your life there is a higher

power, a supreme being." Look at verse 20: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, power, nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made." That means anyone on the face of the earth, regardless of tribe, culture or race, can stand and look up into a starry sky at night, and say, "Hmm...there has to be somebody out there. This couldn't have just happened accidentally." The problem with Americans is that we have wholeheartedly embraced humanism and evolution that says, "Oh, don't worry about it. It did happen accidentally. It was all by random chance."

Really? Go with me for just a moment up to South Dakota and let's stand before Mount Rushmore and look at those 600-foot sculpted faces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. Could you for one moment stand there and say, "Wow, what an accident. It must have been some earthquake a long time ago and those faces were perfectly formed. Or, maybe erosion caused those faces." No, you'd stand there and you'd look and you'd say, "Somebody intelligent designed and sculpted that."

Just look at your watch for a moment. Imagine for one moment your watch or my watch just happened accidentally as the result of an explosion and all the wheels and pins and everything in it just came together accidentally and it keeps time. No. You look at it and say, "Somebody designed it; somebody made it." Well, this is what the Bible is saying, that anybody can look around the world and say, "There is a Creator who is behind all this order and beauty that we see." And that's just the first step.

How can anyone claim they ought to be excused because nobody ever told them about God when all of their life Creation was saying to you, "There's a God. Every sunset has God's signature on it. Every flower is God's reality in blossom. Every mountain is God's reality piled up. Every river is God's reality in motion. I've been talking to you all of your life! Why didn't you listen?"

## **B. God's inner witness is Conscience**

Here's witness number two. I call to the stand Conscience, the inward witness. Paul wrote that there is another witness who testifies that there is a God. To understand this, let's read Romans 2:14. Paul used the word "law" several times, which means God's moral law found in the Bible. I want us to substitute the word "Bible" where Paul uses the word "law." Many people don't have a Bible, but according to this passage they have a Bible written in their hearts. He writes, "(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law (Bible), do by nature things required by the law (Bible), they are a law (Bible) for themselves, even though they do not have the law (Bible), since they show that the requirements of the law (Bible) are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)" (Romans 2:14-15)

Men and women are born with a conscience that gives them an innate sense of right and wrong. Before the Bible was written, before the Ten Commandments, people knew innately, inherently, it was wrong to kill someone else. They knew it was wrong to steal someone else's possessions, and they knew it was wrong to take another man's wife. There was just something about that which caused moral outrage. Where did they get that sense of right and wrong? Conscience. God gave everyone a conscience.

Someone once said a conscience is like a triangle with three sharp corners. Whenever you do something wrong, a point of the triangle jabs you from the inside, and you feel guilty. How in the world can so many people do so many unconscionable things today? A person can sin repeatedly until the sharp corners of their conscience is rounded and worn off. If they ignore the sting of their conscience long enough instead of a sharp triangle there is nothing left but a smooth circle. The Bible mentions people who have had their consciences seared as with a hot iron. That refers to skin that has been burned until there are no nerve endings. There are people today who have rejected their conscience and the testimony of Creation.

But some people may stand before God and claim they should be excused from judgment because they never had a Bible or never heard the Gospel. But God has given them two strong witnesses: creation and conscience. God's light isn't hidden. It is being revealed to everyone.

## **II. GOD'S TRUTH: IF YOU DON'T USE IT, YOU'LL LOSE IT**

"Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." (Mark 4:25) A number of years ago, I made a conscious decision that the basis for truth in my life would be the Word of God. In the Bible, darkness is often used to represent evil or error and light is used to represent goodness and truth. Jesus said truth must be displayed; it can't be hidden. You can't hide anything from God and He isn't hiding anything from you. That's why Jesus said it is very important to consider how you listen to God's Word. If you listen skeptically, saying, "Well, I don't really know if I believe that or not," you are placing God's light under the bed or in a clay jar.

### **A. Those who reject God's light experience spiritual darkness**

Let's go back to the people we talked about earlier who never heard the Gospel or had access to a Bible. There are two possible ways they could respond to the light that God has given them. Here's a person who looks at creation and considers their conscience, but they choose to reject that truth. They disregard God's light. As a result, they lose the truth they have.

Verse 25 sounds like a riddle. "Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." What was Jesus talking about? If a person has a lot of money, does it seem right they get a lot more and that person who only has a little will have what he has taken away? Jesus wasn't talking about money. Does it seem fair the person who has a lot of food should get more, while that person who only has a little food has it taken away? Jesus wasn't talking about food. He was talking about God's truth. If you have it and act on it, you get more. But if you have a little and ignore it, you lose it. You can't just take God's truth and put it in your pocket and save it for a rainy day; you must act on it immediately. God's truth is like an ice cube on a summer day. If you don't take advantage of it, it will soon be gone.

The Bible describes what happens to these people who turn from the light of God's truth. "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." (Romans 1:21)

The following verses talk about the result of their spiritual darkness. See if you don't recognize some of these fruits of spiritual darkness: "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man [that's why people have worshiped idols] and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. [Homosexual sin isn't new, it's been around forever; it's only in our generation that it has become accepted] In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion." (Romans 1:22-27)

In other words, when people reject the light God gives them, they lose that truth and move deeper and deeper into darkness. However, there is always the hope that they will turn from the darkness and start seeking the light of God's truth again. And here's what happens then.

## **B. Those who follow God's light find Jesus**

There is another possibility. Here's a person who doesn't have a Bible and they've never heard the Gospel. But they look at Creation and their conscience and they realize there must be more truth for them to know about God. So they start following the light they have. And when they do, God gives them more light, more truth. Then as they move toward that light, they receive more and more truth. "To whomever has much, more shall be given," Jesus said. As they continue to walk toward the light of God's truth they will ultimately they will be led to truth incarnate—Jesus.

The Bible says, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6) The Creator who spoke light into existence, makes us a new creation when He causes His light to shine in our darkened minds—and we see His greatest glory in Jesus.

Let me give you two examples of this truth, one from the Bible and one from the mission field.

In Acts 10 we meet a Roman Centurion named Cornelius. Perhaps one evening while on sentry duty he looked up into the star-filled skies and thought, "God, who are you? I want to know you." He started out toward the light to find the truth about his Creator. He had never heard of Jesus, yet he prayed and performed good deeds, but he knew this wasn't enough. He wanted more truth. One afternoon Cornelius was asking God to reveal Himself, and God sent an angel. The angel said, "Send a couple of your soldiers down to Joppa and bring a man named Simon Peter here. This man will give you the truth."

Cornelius was a Gentile, a Roman soldier, so Peter would have never even entered his house. So God sent a vision to Peter where there were all kinds of unclean animals in his dream. God said, "Kill and eat." Peter replied, "No way, Lord, those animals aren't kosher." God said, "Don't you call unclean what I have called clean."

And at that exact moment, those two servants from Cornelius knocked on Peter's door and said, "Come with us to Caesarea. God sent an angel to Captain Cornelius and told him to send for you and you would give him the truth."

When Peter arrived, he said, "Sir, as a Jew I would never enter the home of a Gentile and defile myself. But God has just shown me that He is no respecter of persons. What can I do for you?" Cornelius told Peter about his dream, and Peter told Cornelius the truth about Jesus. Cornelius believed and was baptized. He kept walking toward the light—and He found Jesus.

No matter where a person is on planet earth, if they are faithful to the light God gives them, and they keep walking toward the light, they will find Jesus. This happened in Tanzania, Africa in 1992. Rob Moore, one of our Southern Baptist missionaries, was driving out in the bush in his 4-wheel-drive vehicle along with a native African pastor. They were miles away from home base, and were on a dusty road. A truck in front of them was kicking up so much dust they couldn't see more than a few yards ahead. Suddenly a car came out of the dust and collided head-on with Rob's truck. They were wearing seatbelts and weren't seriously injured, but the five Africans in the other vehicle were injured. Rob and the African pastor began to use a first aid kit to help the injured Africans. They send someone to find transportation to a hospital. The soon realized none of the injuries were life-threatening, so Rob and the pastor because to sing songs of praise and give thanks to God.

Meanwhile, unknown to Rob, three African men walked out of the jungle and began speaking in Swahili to the African pastor. They explained that several months earlier they became convinced that there was only one good Spirit, so they denounced their idolatry and shamanism. They started out on a journey to find the truth. They had a dream that a white man would tell them the truth about this good Spirit.

So Rob Moore and the African pastor began to share Jesus with these three leaders. It took 48 hours for a tow truck to arrive to haul away Rob's totaled truck. Meanwhile, fifteen other African men from that tribe had placed their faith in Jesus. They formed a church whose name in Swahili is *Kanisa la Ajali*, which means, "Accident Baptist Church." That was no accident that day, it was a Divine rendezvous for God to show the truth to some people who were walking toward the light.

Sometimes it may take a car wreck, or God may cause a planeload of missionaries to make an emergency landing in the midst of people who are seeking God. Regardless of their ethnic background, their language, their history, any person who seeks the truth about God will find the full truth. And that full truth is in Jesus.

## CONCLUSION

God's truth isn't hidden. It's a lamp that is shining for everyone. His truth is available to everyone. So, you may still be thinking, "Pastor, but how will God judge the pagan who never heard the Gospel?" We'll let God answer that. It's up to Him. But here's YOUR question, "How will God judge someone in East Texas who has heard the gospel dozens of times and walks away from the light?" That's the question you should be considering.

Are you in the light? I've always been a fan of all kinds of Christian music, even what some would call "Christian rock." When my daughters were young they loved the music of D. C. Talk. There was one song they played over and over until it was burned into my brain. The song was "In the Light" and the lyrics said:

I keep trying to find a life;  
On my own, apart from you;  
I am the king of excuses;  
I've got one for every selfish thing I do.  
What's going on inside of me?  
I despise my own behavior;  
This only serves to confirm my suspicions;  
That I'm still a man in need of a Savior.  
The disease of self runs through my blood;  
It's cancer fatal to my soul;  
Every attempt on my behalf has failed;  
To bring this sickness under control."

I wanna be in the light;  
As you are in the light;  
I wanna shine like the stars in the heavens;  
Oh, Lord, be my light and be my Salvation;  
All I want is to be in the light."

Is that your desire today? If you live in the light, then you'll live in the truth.

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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