

Receiving and Rejecting the Light (Part 1)

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[0:00] John chapter 1 verses 9 and 10.

! May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated?

In the summer of 1966, Doug Nichols was working for Operation Mobilization, and he was stationed in London during their big annual conference. And he was assigned to the cleanup crew. And so one night around 1230 in the morning, he was sweeping the steps at the entrance to the conference center when an older gentleman approached him and asked him if this is where the conference was being held.

Doug said that it was, but that just about everyone had already gone to bed. This man was dressed very simply and had just a small bag with him. He said that he was attending the conference. So Doug replied that he would help him try to find a place to sleep for the evening. There was no open rooms, and so he led him to a big room where about 50 people were bunked down on the floor sleeping. The older gentleman had nothing to sleep on, so Doug laid down some padding and a blanket, and he offered him a towel for his pillow. The man who came said I'd just be fine, that he appreciated those provisions, and that he would be just fine for the evening. Then Doug asked the man if he was hungry, if he had had dinner yet.

And it turns out that he hadn't had anything to eat, that he had been traveling all day long. And so Doug took him to the dining room, but it was locked. And so he jimmied the lock and found some cornflakes and milk and bread and jam. And as the man ate, the two began to talk. The man said that he and his wife had been working in Switzerland for several years, and that he had a small ministry there that had served hippies and travelers. He spoke about his work. He spoke about some of the people that he had seen turn their life to Christ. And when he had finished eating, both men turned in for the night.

[3:02] Well, the next morning, Doug woke up, and he realized that he was in a lot of trouble. Well, the conference leaders came to him and said, don't you know who it was that you put on the floor last night? That's Francis Schaeffer. He's the speaker for this conference. We had a whole room set aside just for him. Doug had no idea that he was sleeping on the floor next to one of the great Christian thinkers of his time. And he had told a man to sleep on the floor who had a profound ministry.

He had no idea that this man had helped shape the Christian church of that day, and really, I believe, our church today as well. And Schaeffer let it on, never making a complaint. In humility, he accepted his lot, and he was grateful for what they provided for him, though it was meager. I love this story for many reasons. I love it personally because I'm thankful for the example of Francis Schaeffer in emulating Christ-like humility. He was the keynote speaker. He was the great Francis Schaeffer, but he didn't care about any of those things. He didn't need man's praise, nor did he want it. And more Christians, especially Christian leaders, need to be like that. But let's just say hypothetically that in this story, Doug, the man who didn't recognize Francis Schaeffer after being confronted by the conference leaders for the mistake that he'd made, say he refused to believe them, that it really was Francis Schaeffer. Maybe he would say something like, no, that man couldn't be Francis Schaeffer. He looked so plain. He spoke so plainly. It couldn't have been him. Or perhaps he was so full of pride, he could have been, that he was unwilling to accept the fact that he'd made such a huge mistake in giving one of the greatest Christian minds in history such meager furnishings and such a meager meal before a very important day. Let's say that even after Francis Schaeffer spoke at that conference that Doug still refused to believe that that was really him, thinking that maybe he was an imposter, maybe he kidnapped the real Francis Schaeffer on the way and fooled everybody. He wasn't going to buy it, let's just say, if that was the case. If we were in the place of those conference leaders, and if that was the case, we'd think that Doug had a really

serious problem. And it'd be hard for us to understand how he could refuse to recognize something that was so clearly true. John's purpose for writing the gospel is stated in chapter 20, verse 31. And there he says, but these are written so that you, the reader, may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

However, we see in verses 9 and 10, which we've just read, and we'll see all throughout the rest of this book, that many people did not believe in Jesus, that he was the Son of God, that he was the Christ.

And as believers today, we know that that's still the case, that many people refuse to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he is the Lord and the Savior of the world. And so we think, why?

Why? It seems so clear. Why don't they see what we see? Why do some believe and others do not?

[7 : 26] And so here in these verses, John begins to answer that question. Verses 9 and 10, he begins, and we'll go through next Sunday, verses 11 through 13, which really provide us with an explicitly clear answer to that question, which the rest of his gospel and the rest of the Bible affirms to be true.

So here's the main idea that John has for us that is for our morning sermon. The true light has come into the world, but the world rejected it. And so why is that important? Why is that important for us to know?

Well, as a Christian, it's important because you are called to be a disciple maker. You, who once rejected Christ, have now been commissioned by him to go to those who are rejecting him today and make him known. And so two weeks ago, remember we talked about John the Baptist and how like him, we too are called to bear witness to the light. This, this is the greatest calling of your life. More so than being a mother or a father. More so than where you work or your place of employment. This is the greatest calling of your life. To make Jesus Christ known. To bear witness to the light. Romans 10, 14 through 18, Paul talks about how important this is. How then will they, unbelievers, call on him who they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

This is why it's important for you as a Christian. This is why it's important for us as a church.

Church, we've been brought together by the Lord to equip one another to make disciples, to be better disciples. This is the vision of our church. We're engaging, we're enlightening, we're encouraging, we're equipping for the purpose that we are making disciples and that the disciples that are here are growing in their relationship with Christ and their understanding of his word and being more like him.

This is a vision that's internal and it also spreads out to our community. What do we want to do here? What do we hope to accomplish here? We want to bring glory and honor to the name of Jesus Christ. How do we do that? We make disciples. And we help those who are already disciples become more like Christ. We disciple them in that. Hebrews 10 24 through 25 says it right there and let us Christians, the body of Christ, the church, consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day approaching. John 17 14 through 18. This is our Lord's prayer for us. There he says, I have given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of this world, just as I am not of this world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

[11 : 21] So last Sunday's sermon, as I mentioned earlier, was excellent that Tom preached in his message titled, was church is not a spectator sport. And I hope that you've listened to that sermon because that's so important for us to keep in mind. It made me think of a quote by Oz Guinness about the church today. This is what he had to say. He said, although we are called to be in the world and not of the world, many Christians have reversed the formula, becoming of the world while not really in the world. They did this by allowing cable television, secular movies, secular music, and other forms of communication to infuse worldly values into their thinking while isolating themselves from any personal involvement with the people who most desperately need the gospel. What is he

saying?

I think what he's meaning to say is that we as Christians too often want what the world has to offer without wanting to give to them what we have to offer, which is Jesus Christ. We're content to take whatever they have to offer without giving to them what they most need. That's the gospel, to hear it come from our mouth and hopefully into their ears, into the hearts that they would know the good news of Jesus Christ. This is the attitude that we must have, that we need in the church today. I believe that Charles Spurgeon best characterized it when he said this, if sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped around their needs and needs imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions and let not know, let not one go unwarned and unprayed for, I should say. Do you care that much? Do we care that much? Why is this important for an unbeliever? Because Christ alone is the light. He is the only one that enlightens. He's the only one that gives spiritual illumination. You were created to give worship and you will worship something. But that something that you're worshiping will never satisfy you.

Only Jesus Christ can and Jesus Christ will. So in order to better fulfill our commissioning to be disciple makers, we must understand two facts here about the light that John provides for us in verses 9 and 10. And the first one is this, that the light has come.

Verse 9, again John says, the true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world and now we know that this light has come. He also tells us that this light that has come is the Lord Jesus Christ. Who is this light? What is this light? Well, it's Jesus Christ.

In chapter 1, verse 4 of the same gospel, John established that, that the light is Jesus Christ. He is the eternal, everlasting, Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. There in verse 4 he says, in him was life, in him was life, and the life was the light of men. He is the source of life. Jesus Christ is the sustainer of life. Jesus Christ is the giver of eternal life. He is the exact representation of God himself. Jesus Christ, the eternal, everlasting Word of God, has come into the world. He became the God-man, truly God, and truly man. He is the light. Second, John tells us that the light that has come is true.

[15:23] It's a true light. In the Greek language, the language which the New Testament was originally written in, there are two different but related words that are almost always translated as the word in English true in our Bibles. The first word in Greek is a *lathe face*, which means true as opposed to false, like the sky is blue. That'd be true, especially on a day like today. The grass is green, which would be true, especially on a day like today. Patrick Mahomes is the best quarterback in the NFL, and the Chiefs will win the Super Bowl is true. All right, all right, that one's a little, there's a little room there. He did throw a football out of their stadium, just so you know. It's pretty amazing.

So that's the first word. The second word is a *lathe nas*, and means true as opposed to partial. For example, in a court of law, when a witness is charged, they are charged to give testimony that is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

They are being asked to give exact and specific testimony that is not diluted in any way whatsoever, and that it contains no falsehood or deception. We want to know it. We would say to somebody when we're talking about this, tell me like it is. Don't dilute it. Don't be partial with it. Tell me like it is. The word refers to something that is real. It refers to something that is genuine, and it's used four times in the New Testament. It's used in John chapter 6 verse 32, where there Jesus, after feeding the 5,000, reveals to the crowd that the manna that God gave to the Israelites during the Exodus to sustain them was temporary bread. It was perishable. It was merely a shadow of what God was offering to them in the true, a *lathe nas*, genuine, real bread, who he said was himself. It's Jesus Christ who gives spiritual and eternal and everlasting life. And so as we live as foreigners in this world, we have Christ who gives us our sustenance that we need to live for him as we make our way towards our home with him in our true promised land, which is the kingdom of God, a kingdom that is not of this world.

It's real. It's real. It's genuine. It is not impartial. It is not passing or fading away. In John 19:35, John uses the term to emphasize that he himself was there, and he witnessed with his own eyes the crucifixion of Christ. He says that his testimony there is a *lathe nas*. It's true. It's genuine. It's real. It's not partial. He saw it. He saw Christ's side pierced with the spear. He saw the water mixed with the blood that poured from his side as evidence that either his heart was pierced or his chest cavity was pierced. Either way, the testimony is he died. He truly died.

[18:52] And he says that to give testimony to the fact that just as he truly died, I've seen that he truly lives.

In Luke chapter 16, verse 11, Jesus tells the parable of the dishonest manager, and he uses that term again, *elathenos*, to describe the true riches that are in heaven. There, the encouragement being to us, to use our earthly wealth, which is temporary for God's purposes, that we would store up genuine, true, lasting, real riches that are in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy, and where a thief does not break in and steal. And then finally, the last time it's used in 1 Thessalonians 1.9, Paul details how the Christians of Thessalonica are to turn away from false gods.

To serve the living and *elathenos*. True, genuine, real God. So Jesus is the true bread. He is the true treasure. He is the true God. He is the truth.

Light that gives sight to the blind, and spiritual life to the spiritual dead. Instead, Jesus is able to do this, and only He is able to do this.

Then John also tells us here in verse 9 that the light that has come gives light to everyone. John tells us that this light is genuine. He's told us that this light is coming, but in the middle of those two statements, He says that this light gives light to everyone. And so there has been, and there continues to be today, some debate about what exactly John meant with this statement. And there are really four viewpoints. The first is that they say that this statement speaks of general revelation.

[20:57] Speaking of the fact that every man, every person without exception has been given ample evidence of God's existence, so they are without excuse for rejecting Him. And so they'll point to Romans 1.20, where the Apostle Paul says, Others say that this statement speaks of the true light as shining in reference to the incarnation of Christ, illuminating every man, not without exception, but without distinction.

So what's saying there is that, you know, the Jews were shocked to hear that the Gentiles would be included in the kingdom of God. They were known as the world to them. And so the thought here is that it's alluding to the fact that this is not all men without exception, but all men without distinction, that He is the light source for all types of people. And then third, there's a variation of the second, which really is an appeal to Augustine's famous illustration of a town that only has one teacher.

That teacher is the teacher for everyone. Even if they don't want to go be taught by that teacher, He is the only teacher available. And so too, Christ is the only true light that God has given to the world. And therefore, He is the only light available for every man. However, though all these statements may be true, theologically speaking, I believe that the best understanding of this statement is found by looking more deeply into the words that we've just read. The context in which John is speaking. In verse 9, John sets the stage for verse 10, where we have this shocking statement.

That though the world was made by Christ, and though He was walking in it and living in their midst, they didn't know Him. And they flat out rejected Him. So I think that this statement is speaking to the truth that this light is a light that divides. Some receive this light with gladness, while others reject it with hatred. In John's gospel, it is repeatedly the case that the light that the light shines on all, and it forces this distinction to be made. Those who hate the light respond as the world does. And those who receive it, receive it with great gladness and great joy.

[24:13] That flies in the face of liberal theology today. They don't want to think that Christ would divide anybody, right? He loves us as we are. He finds no problem in us whatsoever. He's so obsessed with us that He's willing to take us without wanting to change us in any way whatsoever. I like this quote I posted on Facebook this week by Sinclair Ferguson. He said, it is misleading to say that God accepts us the way that we are. Rather, He accepts us despite the way that we are. He receives us only in Christ and for Christ's sake. Nor does He mean to leave us the way that He found us, but to transform us into the likeness of His Son. And I don't know about you, but I'm thankful that God wasn't content to leave me as I was prior to my conversion. And I'm thankful that He's not going to leave me the way I am today in the future. Scriptures that reveal this. John 3, 19-21. Jesus says, 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. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 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. We see this distinction. John 8, 12. Again, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. John 9, 39-41. Jesus said, for judgment I came into this world.

Those who not see may see, and those who see may become blind. Some of the Pharisees heard Him say these things and said to Him, are we also blind? Jesus said to them, if you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now that you say we see, your guilt remains. We see these distinctions. The true light creates divisions amongst those being saved and amongst those who are perishing. Matthew 10, 34-37.

Jesus speaking, do not think that I came to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. 2 Corinthians 15, 17. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To one, a fragrance from death to death. To the other, a fragrance from life to life, just as Christ was. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not like so many peddlers of God's Word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God in the sight of God, we speak in Christ. So we see this light makes distinctions. Again, the shock here is not so much that the light has come, but that the light that has come has been rejected. And so this should give us a clue as to the depths of just how sinful and fallen mankind truly is. James White said, if you really understand the depth of your own sin and the holiness of God, what would blow your mind about Romans 9, 9, 13 is not Esau I hated, it would be Jacob I loved. That's the shocking thing. So this leads us to the other fact about the light that John provides to us in these verses, that the light was rejected by the world. Verse 10, he was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. Now I would tell you today that more people know of Jesus Christ, more so than they do any other person. Not everyone believes the same things about him. And he's pretty, you know, he's pretty well known throughout the world. Though we continue to take his gospel to the ends of the earth, and that continues today, the case that I'm trying to make is that there is nobody better known in all of the world than Jesus Christ. No one past, no one present. But during Jesus' earthly ministry for some 30 years, from the time of his birth in Bethlehem until the time of his public ministry, Jesus Christ, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, was nobody in the eyes of the world. And again, this point points an instructive finger to us, to sinful mankind about just how affected by sin we are to our depravity. It reveals just how spiritually blind, unredeemed people are. So here we see that they weren't looking for him. Nobody was looking for this light to come. Nobody was bending over backwards to prepare a suitable place for Mary and Joseph to spend the night as she gave birth to our

Lord. The only people whom God made aware of his coming on that night were shepherds who, in the eyes of the world, in the eyes of the world, were nobodies. It wasn't until years later when the Magi came from the east to worship our Lord and wanted to know where they could find him. But even still, those whom they asked didn't know that he had come. And off the top of their heads, they didn't know where to look for him. Herod had to summon for the chief priests and the scribes to search the scriptures to find out where the Messiah was supposed to be born. They didn't know this light was coming. They didn't know that this light had come. And they didn't really care until they found out that he had come. And then when they found out, Herod found out that he had come, guess what he wanted to do? Kill him. And so he sent his men to the tiny town of Bethlehem and murdered all of the little boys in that community. They weren't looking for him and they didn't recognize him when he came.

[31:30] And again, they didn't recognize him because they were spiritually blind. 1 Corinthians 2.14, 2 Corinthians 4.3-4 In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

They weren't looking for him. They didn't recognize him. And then they didn't believe him. Jesus was rejected even in his own hometown.

Remember, he goes to the synagogue. He picks up the book of Isaiah, the scroll, and he reads and he sits down and they say, Who is this?

Who does he think he is? Isn't this Mary and Joseph's son? The carpenter's boy? We're going to believe that now he's the Messiah. Not only did they take offense to that, not only did they reject that, but they tried to push him off a cliff.

Remember? His own hometown. His own step-son. Remember? His brothers refused to believe that he was the Christ.

[32:57] Jesus was rejected by the scribes and the Pharisees. He was rejected by the Jews. They rejected him even in favor of receiving Barabbas, a murderous terrorist, in his place.

Could you imagine facing such rejection? I want to close by reading two lengthy sets of Scripture. Because we're having communion today and I hope that you'll read these with me in preparation for what we're going to do when we come together to the Lord's table.

The light has come. The light was rejected. Why was he rejected? Let's read Isaiah 53. Who has believed what he has heard from us?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire him.

[34:18] He was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

[35:30] By oppression and judgment he was taken away, and as for his generation who considered that he was cut off of the land of the living, stricken for the transgressions of my people, and they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet, it was the will of our Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring.

He shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied.

By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous. And he shall bear their iniquities. Jesus was rejected for us.

By us, for us, innocent in every way, absolutely pure and holy. I hate feeling rejected.

[36:52] And I couldn't imagine the rejection that he felt. Yet he felt it willingly for us. This is how sinful we are that it was necessary for him to lay down his life in our place, bearing our iniquities for what we have done.

I wonder if the world looks at the church and if they wonder that they see a lot of people within the church rejecting what the Bible says about Jesus Christ in order to better fit in with the world, in order to be more acceptable to them, in order to preach to them a message we feel like they will accept.

And man, I know it's hard, especially in our community, even right now, to let our light shine for Christ and we're tempted to reject him.

Though we wouldn't say it outright, though we may not even realize we're doing it, but we're careful about what we say. Maybe we're not going to be as bold around certain people. And so we grow weary in this. And so I want to close by reading Hebrews 12, verses 1 and 3.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely. Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, faced the rejection, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

[38:38] Considered him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. Church, there is so much for us to be doing.

Now is not the time to be spectating on the sidelines. Now is the time to get involved. Now is the time to let your light shine for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you.