

A Question Of Light And Darkness

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Date: 27 April 1991

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[0 : 0 0] circumstance. We have a couple of detectives from the Vancouver Police Department here, and I met a couple weeks ago, and one of them is going to talk a little bit about this topic.

And I'm not going to let them tell you how come I met them, but I assure you, I'm innocent. Okay? All right? And so... Anyway, this text is, especially John 3.16 is a very well-known text, and this idea of lightness, light and darkness, and why Christ came into the world is something that I think, I was thinking more and more, I was having lunch with these guys last week, and I was saying, you know, you think about darkness and light, you must see it all the time as detectives. And one of them said, we see it, we see a lot of darkness. And I said, well, can one of you guys share a little bit about your faith in Christ and what you see there. Let me start down the road, though, to say that this text really deals with two very present realities. One of them is implicit, which is the reality of judgment. If you don't believe in Christ, you're condemned already. And the other one is one of salvation, that if you believe in Christ or the light of the world, you're saved. Now, God's choice, as opposed to ours, God's choice is to judge or to save. That's his option. It's his prerogative.

It isn't ours. Our option is to be judged or to be saved. Now, because the text says God loves the world, he chooses to save. How? He sent his only son into the world, i.e. sent the idea of God's only son incarnate, God in the flesh. And he gave his only son, it says in verse 16, gave as in gave up, or as in the idea of one died, or the idea of the death on the cross. For so all those who believe in Christ have eternal life or salvation, because God loves the world, and he gave and sent his son. So we kind of know where God's motive is. We also know where God's heart is. And our choice, like I said, is to be judged or to be saved. Now, the text says, because we love darkness, we choose often evil, which means we're already condemned. It's a present tense word.

And we face certain judgment. Now, the text says here, it says, I don't know, verse, it says that we love darkness, that light has come in the world, and men love darkness rather than light. And our deeds, because our deeds are evil. Yet we must have some sense of right and wrong, because the very next verse says that we hate the light and are afraid of the deeds, or of our deeds will be exposed. Now, if we really love darkness, if you really love somebody, you wouldn't care who knew. If you really love doing something, happen to love hockey, you don't care if someone knows you're at a hockey game.

[3 : 0 4] If you really love something, then you don't care what other people think. You happen to like it. They may think you're neurotic. They may think you're wrong. But for you, you love it, you like it. Now, this says that we have a predilection to love darkness, because we tend to like deeds which are evil. And I think as we get through Gary's testimony, we can, by the time he's done, we're all going to feel very guilty. And except me, I already said I was innocent. And then, but the other half of that coin is that we also hate the light. Now, how can someone who loves darkness, prefers it, likes evil deeds, at the same time, want to not be exposed? Well, I would say that's, unless they're completely depraved, that's because inside, because we're made in God's image, because God's spirit is upon the world, there's a sense of conscience. We know what we should be doing, and we know what we're not doing, and we know that we do certain things in darkness and not in light. We know that they're wrong, and we don't want to be found out. Now, the question is, what to do with this light, because Christ is a light. And here's the flow of the argument, and then I want Gary to share a bit. The flow of the argument goes something like this. If we choose darkness, because we prefer deeds that are evil, we'll do all we can to avoid the light, because of our guilt, and thus we stand condemned, and we face judgment. Now, if we choose light, because, look at the verse that says, because, in verse 21, he who does what is true, because we're doers of the truth, we live by the truth, we're not threatened by light. When the light comes, we're absolutely fine, because we're forgiven by Christ. His death has forgiven us of our sin, and thus we face a certainty of salvation. So

there's the strand, there's the argument of the text. And the question I guess today, what I wanted Gary to do, Gary, come on up here, and I'll put you on the spot. I would like to say, if you don't laugh at his joke, and you're not enraptured by his comments, you may get a ticket on your car. So I think there's some leverage here.

This is Gary Voth. He's been with the Vancouver Police Department for 15 years. And over here is Roy Fleming. He's been with the department for 16 years. Is that right? And they are currently partners. And so, Gary, what I want you to do, and I'm going to give you this mic, because I want to ask you some questions. And we may use this in court later, so don't be careful what you say. All right? Good. Yeah. I'll hold it. Stand over here. And I want you to first just say a little bit about your background, who you are, and your involvement with the police department. And then I want to ask you to deal a little bit with the darkness and light, what you see in the city. Okay. And before I do that, may not be a surprise to many of you how persuasive Tom can be. I met him last Thursday, and within an hour and a half of meeting him, he had me talked into coming and sharing this afternoon. I guess the lesson here, we can all be happy that he's not an insurance salesman. He'll be in a lot of trouble. He's selling something that's... What's that? We're working on that. You're working on that. Well, in a way, he is pushing life insurance, isn't he? So, anyway. No, it's a privilege to be here and speak with you folks and share a little bit. I was born and raised in the church and gave my heart to Christ at an early age, and probably every week thereafter until I was in my teens and realized you only have to do it once. And then that's it. You believe it by faith and go from there. And then I joined the police department.

And as Tom said, all policemen are very acquainted with the dark side of life. We all are. We all know what sin is. And we all, if you don't come in contact on a daily basis like we would, you read about it in the papers. You see it on the papers. You see it on the news. It's portrayed in movies and et cetera, et cetera. So, but Tom asked me to share some examples perhaps of the dark side that we would see. And one thing that came to mind, there's many, but I spent two years on the Vice Squad in Vancouver working prostitution detail, during which time I came in contact with literally, well, it would be thousands of cases of prostitution. And without picking one particular case, they're also common, at least as prostitutes as victims. And when you look at a criminal, no matter what the crime is, a criminal's background, it's not an excuse, but there are explanations for people's behavior.

And some are able to handle it in other ways, less destructive ways perhaps, even to themselves. But prostitutes in general, so many of them come from abused childhoods, bad homes. And they run away to get away from that and also seek acceptance somewhere. So as children or young teens, many of them would run and they go to the streets where they are accepted by other teens who ran away for their own reasons. So they have something in common. What would happen with a lot of them is that while they're out in the streets and they're being accepted by these street people, they meet up with other elements like such as pimps. And the pimps are very smart in what they do in that they will befriend this girl. They're usually quite a bit older. These guys have got a lot of money.

[9 : 16] They look like they're quite influential. So this person will show them concern or at least befriend them, pay attention to them. Well, this is something that a lot of these girls have not seen in a long time. Then they will buy them things, buy them nice jewelry. Well, whether it's, they don't realize, or I guess a lot of them don't realize it's a false gift. They're just so in need of someone to like them. Then they'll take it a step further and the pimp will tell them that he loves them, you know, and wants her to move in with him. And of course, they're just waiting for something. They're looking for love. They're looking for acceptance. And they're now being paid attention. And even if inside, they may not really believe that this guy loves them in particular, they really are at a point where they're not willing to turn that down.

So thereafter, to prove their love, of course, they're put to work in the streets. And they're usually get hooked on drugs that the pimples supply. And once they're on the street working for him and he's got them under their control, then of course, he doesn't have to love them quite so much or pretend that he does. They are out there because they have to be. Now they haven't got a choice. They've got a drug habit. They've got nowhere else to go. It's hard to go home then and say, by the way, I'm a drug addict and I've been working the streets. So they don't, they don't have any former friends. The only friends they have are the other girls on the streets that work with them.

Plus, of course, there's the threat of penalty if they would try to leave. Another thing, because they're looking for something, I suppose too, when they're dealing with customers or Johns, that they, for once in their life, they think that they now have control over the man. They are in control. They don't realize that they are the ultimate victims and that these guys will pay and they're then obligated to do whatever he wants. So it's a sad story.

And it goes beyond that because we're not just dealing with people who are drug addicts and runaways and prostitutes and pimps. The people that keep this whole ugly scene going, this whole darkness, are the customers. And you can all rest easy. I don't recognize anybody here this afternoon. But it was amazing and shocking, really. Even for a policeman, I'd been on about 12 years before I got in the vice squad. And I couldn't believe we worked different areas, prostitutes. Of course, you probably have heard that there's different, I guess, classes of prostitute. And when we used to work down in the skids, amazing the number of fancy cars that are driving the back lanes of East Hastings Street. You know, Mercedes Benzes and BMWs and whatever.

all class levels looking for something down there. And it's not that they don't realize there's perhaps prettier girls, if you want to call it that, somewhere else. It's the condition of the sinful man, of your mind, and how one sin can lead to another. And everyone has to live with their own sins and their own, well, if you want to call it out there, depravity. Another thing that used to amaze us is when you first get into it is how you look on some of the prostitutes and you think these people are going to starve to death because they're not going to make any money at this. But it's unbelievable.

[12 : 46] Everybody makes money, some more than others, obviously. But it just shows the condition of the human spirit where they can go from there. And I think it's something to remember that you know, when we're talking about light and darkness, it's important to remember that sin is sin. And if sin is darkness, there's no degrees of darkness.

When it's dark, it's dark. And it's easy to point the finger at other people and say, well, I'm not involved with that. One other example quickly is I was working down as a supervisor down in the skids and I got called into the station to the front counter. And there was a man there, I guess, in his 50s. And he looked like a down and out type, but he looked very sullen and his head was down. And the policeman who's working the front desk, this was about a year ago, said, this gentleman wants to talk to you. He wants to confess something. So, okay, this happens quite a bit, you know. It's usually nothing to it. But anyway, I sat down and I say, you got something to tell me?

He says, yes, I murdered somebody. So, sort of perks my interest up. And I said, when did this happen? Two days ago. Okay, tell me what happened. He went on to tell me how in a drunken rage, he doesn't know why, he visited a female native friend in the skids. And for a reason, well, either he wouldn't tell or he didn't know, he started to strangle her with his hands.

And when, after a few minutes, he could see that she wasn't going to die. And he took her sweatshirt half off and wrapped the arm around her neck and choked her to death. And I said, what happened then?

He says, I left. And I said, well, how do you know she's dead? He says, I went back and I checked. She was dead. She was still there. And I said, do you know if this body has been recovered yet, discovered? He says, no, as far as I know. And I sent down a team of policemen and sure enough, they forced their way in and they found her dead. This is after two days. You know, it's like Tom was relating there. In the passage, there is something within us, the conscience that God has put in man, that makes us realize the difference between sin and good. And yet the fact that we're born in sin, I think it goes back to this passage is it's interesting when I say that all sin is darkness and God doesn't differentiate between that. Like it's easy for us to say, well, I've never murdered anybody. I haven't been involved as prostitutes, you know, but we've all sinned and we all know that.

[15 : 34] And I don't think there's anybody that would deny that. And, you know, God doesn't allow any kind of darkness in glory in heaven. You know, he doesn't tolerate that. And so I think we have to remember that all our sin is the same and the only light that's available is the light of Christ, you know. And when we are in a dark room and you strike the match and it's just a small light, it illuminates the whole room. The darkness is gone, you know. And I think that's something that we have to remember. We all have to come to the place where, in a way, the analogy is this guy finally realized it is the reason he came in, by the way, was he said, I just can't live with myself.

I can't live with the thought that I've done this and I want to turn myself in. He was willing to pay the penalty. Well, you know, the penalty for us, for whatever sins we've committed, you know, the price has been paid. And, you know, we just have to accept the light, you know. And some questions.

Gary, tell them a little bit about what you and Roy do in terms of investigations and you do background checks on people or businesses. What are you looking for? Yeah, we're... I have some suggestions.

Right now we're involved with the Intelligence Unit and we are basically, we investigate and watch extremist terrorist groups. There aren't too many terrorists active in Vancouver right now, but there's plenty of extremists. And that includes anyone from Aryan nation, like white supremacists, skinhead types, religious cults of different kinds, satanic cults, what else? Anarchist movement, political extremists, all of that. Now, depending on who the person is and how much detail we want to go into, I'm sure you probably have an idea that most policemen develop a lot of contacts in the community and you start by checking someone on the basics of checking to see whether they have a criminal record or not.

Then you can go beyond that. You can go to any time that he's ever been mentioned in a police report, let's say, throughout the Lower Mainland. You can go to other police agencies. You can go to immigration to find out things. You can go to certain financial institutions and find out certain information about that. And you can go back, well, as far as you feel is necessary to find an answer. Depends what you're looking for.

[18:11] Gary and Roy will be here for a while afterwards, but thank you very much for taking the time to come down here.

Oh, you're welcome. Well, if I can be of the help of anybody, feel free to contact me. Tickets, though, are out of the question. I can't do anything those days. If you're willing to speak with anyone.

Thanks, Gary. Well, I think it's refreshing for me to hear a policeman talk about light and darkness and what they see.

I guess if this was total darkness, if this is the world and it's in darkness, I guess the argument of the text is that somewhere, if this was all darkness, somewhere God decided to send light.

And like Gary said, you might imagine a dark room and you can see the whole area. And the choice is, is that it seems to me that we know God's choice was to send love into the world, to send light into darkness, to send Christ in for sin.

[19:32] In other words, he came that we might have life. Now, our choice, like I said earlier on in the text, is to stand condemned and judged already, or to take God up on his offer of who he sent.

Now, I started thinking about this background check. I was reading yesterday in the Vancouver Sun, quote, Just two weeks after Bill Van Der Zandt left the Premier's office in disgrace, Johnson promised to exact the very highest standards from personnel and public conduct from her cabinet. And there'll be no, quote, second chances. And the more you get involved, I was just curious how thorough she's going to be.

What kind of issues have to, do the cabinet have to be involved in to have their heads lopped off?

Well, I wasn't sure, but my greater question was, this background check, if the light of the background check in our own life is done, how thorough of a background check would it take to the point that somehow, somewhere, are hidden in the backs of our, in the corners of, in crevices of our own life, are examples of darkness?

How thorough would they have to be? Do we, we start with, like Gary said, we start with saying, I was talking to a gentleman the other day who's been worshiping for years at a local church, and he went up to me and said, this is a quote, and he's very well known in the community, and gone to church for 20 or 30 years, and he said, quote, I don't know why we have confession at this church.

[21:17] And I said, well, why? He said, well, I don't know when he's sinners. I look out here, and they're all successful people, and professionals, and they all, you know, have nice homes, and this is for people, well, on the Indian reservations, is what he said to me.

And I said, that launched us into a two-hour discussion. I'm not sure. I think we're still friends. But the point is, is that there's a sense in which, depends on how much the heat you want to turn up.

You see, C.S. Lewis once argued that it's the comparison that we base our pride on. I'm wealthy. How do I know I'm wealthy? Because I have more money than Don.

And I'm happy, because I'm more happy, I'm happy than that person who's depressed. And I'm successful, because I know so-and-so's unsuccessful. So our yardstick, as we live life, is something else, someone else.

But the argument is, when your yardstick is the light of light, of light itself, the very light of being, is God himself, if your yardstick is Jesus Christ, and the scope light is turned on to do a security check

and a background check on you, how do you measure up?

[22 : 31] Well, the argument of the scriptures would be, is that ultimately, we're all going to be, just like the prostitute, where before that, we're all going to stand as condemned. We're all ultimately going to have said, we've opted out, and we love darkness, and we're terribly afraid, of complete exposure.

And here's the irony. Some of you are quite public. You're very public in your business. Or you're very public in some organization. Or you're very public in your neighborhood. And in one sense, the great irony is, you seem to be a little bit on the stage.

Or in the limelight. But no one's more aware than you, that your life is full of darkness. You know, a professor at Stanford years ago, came up with a theory that we all, I know it was a theory, it's called the imposter syndrome.

That someone's going to walk up to you someday, as a neurosurgeon, or as a lawyer, or as a banker, or as, and then say, who, or as a developer, and say, who are you trying to fool?

Because you have a sense that you're being an imposter. You know how much you don't know. You know how, how shifting the sand is.

[23 : 47] You, and someone with real authority turned to you and said, whoever thought you could be a barrister, part of you go, yeah, I don't know. Oh, why did I ever do this? You know, how did you think you could be a chartered accountant?

With, with your ethics. Look at this mistake, and this mistake, and this mistake. I mean, we all get branded, you see, and our motives begin to be under the, under the spotlight of Christ.

Darkness of the world is dark, is our own darkness. Now, to press the point a bit, is this world, this world that we tend to demean, that we tend to try to get the, it's interesting, someone said, you try to climb and get the top of the heap, and that's all you find is you're in a heap.

And that's all the world is. And you scrambled your whole life to get there. Big deal, the author said.

And the point is, is that, what is this world? This world of selfishness, this world of self-serving, this world of sin, this world of chaos, this world of depravity, this world of denial, this world where, you know, there is a great sense of a differentiation between the desperate needs of people, and gluttony, and miserliness, on the other hand.

You could take this whole world, and it's this world full of warts and all that Jesus Christ died for.

And we stop there, and we draw the line, and we say, because he loved this world, don't ask me why, but he created us.

[25 : 14] And we, we have to make a, we have to make a, I lost my, I've done a Harry Robinson, I've lost something. Oh, here. Because we have to migrate from God being our creator over here, because I believe he created the heavens and the earth, he created us, and our trip is to make him our father.

That's our migration. We can't do anything about being created by God. He made us. This is his world. He loves it. But we can do something about whether he's our father or not, whether we have a relationship with him or not.

And I think the argument is, God looks down on this world, so loved the world, he sent his son. But he also called the spade a spade. He said, we will prefer darkness.

We will hide from the light. So the very thing that offers us grace and hope and love and redemption and a new start in life is the very thing that scares us to death.

But I think, as we concentrate on the light and not on the darkness, there's no competition. I think, ultimately, as we get to know the good news, we get to respond to the good news giver.

[26 : 24] Now, let me summarize. You can rest assured of a couple of things because of this text. That the light of the world, Jesus Christ, has come. You can rest assured of that.

Also, that the deeds of evil and darkness will someday be exposed. And we also can rest assured that there is certain forgiveness and there's certain judgment that will confront us all.

Now, John goes on to say in John 3.16, goes on to say in John 10, that the Son of God came that we might have life. Or, if you have, I am the light of the world, if you believe in me, though you may die, yet you shall always live.

The whole argument of the Gospel of John launches from this chapter 3. Now, I guess the question is this. Since we know God loves us because of Jesus Christ, he was sent and died, how do we respond, you and me, to God's love?

Do we love him in return? Do we love God enough to accept forgiveness because of what Christ has done? Do we love God enough to pursue the truth, as the text says, rather than evil?
[27 : 26] Do we love God enough to choose life, not death? And I think, ultimately, it comes down to a question of light and darkness. And I guess, whether you serve as a detective for the police department or as a businessman downtown, ultimately, the older you get, the more aware there is in darkness in your own life and in the world and the more aware you are that there needs to be light.

And when the light's turned on, you either feel exposed or you feel forgiven. And the difference is where Jesus Christ is. Is he in your heart and you feel forgiven or is he outside intimidating you because you feel judged?

And that's a choice. And it starts with making him your father. Let's pray. Father, we are grateful that in this argument of darkness and light that you are the light of the world and that we can respond to that light.

And we pray that today you would help us to commit anew, if we know you, to commit ourselves anew to following you, to let your light shine through us and to clear out the cobwebs where we hide and live a life of duplicity.

And if we don't know you, help us not to be afraid of the great good news, but help us to embrace it and to feel true light and forgiveness for the very first time.

[28 : 54] And we pray this in the revealed name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.test, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.