



EMERGING FROM
DARKNESS

- Truth and error, knowledge and ignorance, salvation and condemnation – these are frequently represented as light and darkness in the Bible, for obvious reasons. One could not be more different than the other.
- Those who live in darkness cannot comprehend the light. It is foreign and threatening (John 1:1-5, 9).
- When Jesus chides Nicodemus for his failure to grasp the “new birth” in John 3:1-10, He proceeds to explain why the earthly mind struggles to comprehend heavenly concepts: “Men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.”
- In this lesson I want to explore *why* it is so hard for some to understand the gospel, and what we must do to help people (even ourselves) emerge from the darkness.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

A dark, atmospheric photograph of a forest. Sunlight streams through the dense canopy of tall, thin trees, creating a bright, glowing path of light on the forest floor. The light is soft and ethereal, with a lens flare effect. The overall mood is serene and spiritual.

1 CORINTHIANS 2

- Priorities – If your mindset is entirely physical, earthly, fleshly, then that is all you're capable of seeing. We have a tendency to be consumed by what is most occupying in the moment (sports, planning for major life events, an "occupation").
- Preconceptions – Perhaps a bad experience with "religion" has closed the mind to consideration. All people come to the gospel message with a set of ideas and expectations.
- Prejudice – Carefully analyze the ideas you were exposed to in your upbringing. Were you raised to believe Christians were ignorant, that the Bible is full of errors and backward ethics, that no educated person believes in non-material things?

**BUT, WHY CAN'T THEY
UNDERSTAND?**

INCAPABLE OF BELIEF?

The Calvinist might add that people are incapable of understanding because God has not changed the heart so as to understand – as if only an act of the Holy Spirit can alter the disposition of our wills and “change our minds” about the gospel. But is that true? Romans 10:17 and Ephesians 3:3-5 indicate that faith and understanding come through reading the word. Personal volition is always a key part of accepting the gospel (Col. 1:4-8, 1 Thess. 2:13, John 12:44-50, Matt. 11:15, Rev. 13:9). Even favorite proof-texts of the Calvinist prove otherwise (John 6:44-45, Acts 16:14).

A photograph of a forest with sunlight streaming through the trees, creating a bright, glowing effect in the center. The text is overlaid on this image.

BUT WHAT ABOUT
ROMANS 8:7?

LIGHT/SPIRIT

- Volition, choice ("mind set")
- It is not mere feelings, but attitudes, actions, and consequences (vv. 6, 13, 17).
- Defined by its power to make us capable, useful, effective.
- In sync with God and His will.
- Active, passionately pursuing spiritual things and eliminating sin (v. 13).

DARKNESS/FLESH

- Choice ("does not subject")
- Feelings play a large part. What feels right, instinct, irrational desires.
- A hopeless existence, without purpose or capability (vv. 7-8).
- Hostile to God.
- Slavery, fear, nothing but a dead end existence, literally (vv. 6, 15).

A hand is shown from the bottom, with the index finger pointing upwards towards a bright, circular light source at the top of the frame. The background is dark, and the light source is the only bright element, creating a strong contrast. The hand is positioned centrally, and the light source is directly above it.

SO HOW DO WE EMERGE
FROM THE DARKNESS?

- How I live affects how I think. The negative consequences of my bad choices can cloud my judgment and fill me with bitterness, jealousy, selfishness. Because I choose to sin, and sin has a certain effect on me, I make myself practically incapable of understanding the word. This is how sin "darkens" us (Eph. 4:17-18). Take note of James 3:13ff.
- I have to stop reading the Bible with an ulterior motive (James 1:5ff). Is there any area of learning where this works? There is a big difference between "I want to ask tough questions to see if the Bible is true" and "I want to ask tough questions to prove the Bible is false."
- Lifestyle change must come before the "feelings." If I want to feel like I'm living in the light, I need to stop living in the darkness first. I need to stop loving my dark deeds (John 3:19). Darkness came as a result of sinful living according to Romans 1:21-25.