

Living In the Light of the Gospel of John

#3

John 7-9

I'm sure you have felt the pressure. Sometime its harder than at other times. Often there are so many demands and then there are those internal struggles as well. We cry out for God to help us with a certain problem but we don't see an immediate answer. The temptation is to give up. In John 6:60-69 we see many who were following Jesus did give up. Jesus declared in verses 63, 64, "The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing. The Words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are Life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe."(NIV) If we honestly look at the facts much of our struggle is a result of our determination to do it our way. This means we are desiring to live in the flesh. Jesus says, "the flesh counts for nothing." That means we must realize "the Spirit gives Life." As we realize that "God is Love" and that He cares deeply for us we are free to submit to His will and let His Spirit give us life. This involves believing and trusting. Those that don't do this will give up and go back to the sin Jesus delivered them from. We read in verse 66, "From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him." In response Jesus asked a question that He could direct at each of us. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Before you answer perhaps you should take a look at Simeon Peter's response found in John 6:68, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of Eternal Life."(NIV) Yes, if you are going to leave, where do you plan to go and how do you plan to stay out of the same mess you found yourself in before? Believers know they have only one choice and that is to remain faithful to the Living Lord. That means realizing not only that Jesus "has the Words of Eternal Life" but also letting those words guide, strengthen and invigorate us each and everyday. For this reason we continue to desire to live in the Light of Jesus Christ as we study John 7, 8, 9.

Remember the Gospel of John was "written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."(John 20:31NIV) Life, that's what the children of Israel desired as they left the slavery of Egypt for the Promised Land. Their unbelief kept them wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. Now Jesus, John records, has come to take us to the Promised Land of Life in His name if we will believe. This is illustrated by Jesus during the Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles described in John 7. "With the Feast already half over, Jesus showed up in the Temple, teaching. The Jews were impressed, but puzzled: 'How does He know so much without being schooled?'" (John 7:14,15 The Message Bible) When Jesus directly answers their question in John 8:57,58 we see their response. "Believe Me," said Jesus, 'I AM Who I AM long before

Abraham was anything.’ That did it-pushed them over the edge. They picked up rocks to throw at Him. But Jesus slipped away, getting out of the Temple.(The Message Bible)

Unbelief had robbed those that Jesus was trying to help experience life, from receiving that life, love and light that He had come to share. He was trying to help them understand the real meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast was to be a feast of great joy to celebrate Israel’s deliverance out of Egypt. It involved the blowing of trumpets, the offering of seventy bulls and the pouring out of water in the Temple. During this festival the inner court was illuminated with a lighted torch parade. This was a symbol of the pillar of fire that guided the children of Israel by night as they went through the wilderness. In John 8:12 Jesus declared, “I AM the Light of the world.” Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life.”(NIV)

The Festival of the Tabernacles lasted 8 days. Leviticus 23:36. says, “ on the eighth day hold a sacred assemble and present an offering made to the Lord by fire.” When the people thanked God at the celebration of Tabernacles for all the fruits of the past year they did not forget His gift of rain. The gift of water had gone forth centuries before in the words of the prophet, “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;”(Is.55:1 NIV). Now Jesus was repeating this in reference to Himself. “Then, on the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and cried aloud: ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me; whoever believes in Me, let him drink.’ As Scripture says, ‘Streams of living water shall flow out from within him.’ He was speaking of the Spirit which believers in Him would receive later; for the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.”(John 7:37-39 New English Bible) Jesus was the fulfillment of Isaiah 12:3 which declares, “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”(NIV)

As we study John 7 and 8 we see that the tension is building between Jesus and the religious establishment. “So the people were in two minds about Him-some of them wanted to arrest Him, but so far no one laid hands on Him. Then the officers returned to the Pharisees and Chief priests, who said to them, ‘Why haven’t you brought Him?’ ‘No man ever spoke like that!’ they replied. ‘Has He pulled the wool over your eyes, too?’ retorted the Pharisees.’”(John 7:43-47 Phillips Translation)

It was the Pharisees who were the ones with the wool pulled over their eyes. They were so blinded that all they could think about was carrying out the law regardless of who was destroyed. Jesus on the other hand was concerned about restoration. When a woman was caught in the act of adultery the Pharisees believed stoning her was the answer.(John 8:4,5) “They were trying to trap Him (Jesus) into saying something incriminating so they could bring charges against Him. Jesus bent down and wrote with His finger in the dirt. They kept at Him, badgering Him. He straightened up and said, ‘the sinless one among you, go first: Throw the stone.’ Bending down again, He wrote some more in the dirt. Hearing

that, they walked away, one after another, beginning with the oldest. The woman was left alone. Jesus stood up and spoke to her. ‘Woman, where are they? Does no one condemn you?’ ‘No one, Master.’ “Neither do I,’ said Jesus. ‘Go on your way. From now on, don’t sin.’(John 8:6-11 The Message Bible)

Talk about light in a dark hopeless situation. Jesus showed He was a God of mercy not one determined to kill with a death penalty. Do you ever wonder what Jesus wrote on that ground? Turning to Jeremiah 17:13 we read, “O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from Me shall be written in the earth.”(King James Version) Perhaps He was writing the names and the sins of those who wanted to kill that woman. Jesus was casting light on their dark hidden sins. After all, secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven. “Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.”(Psalm 90:8 KJV)

Following the example of casting light in dark hopeless areas of the human heart Jesus declares, “I AM the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life,” What Jesus is telling you and me right now in the midst of our questions for the future is, why settle for speculation when you can have revelation.

Jesus is the Great I AM. In Exodus 3:14 God declares “I AM That I AM” Now Jesus says, “I AM the Light of the world.”(John 8:12) In John 6:35 He declared, “I am the Bread of Life.” He also states, “I am the Door”(John 10:9), I am the Resurrection and the Life”(John 11:25), “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life “(John 14:6), and “I am the Vine, you are the branches.”(John 15:5)

Here Jesus declares, “I AM the Light of the world.” He has just exposed the sins of the Scribes and Pharisees. Just like a light turned on in a dark room they run like roaches and rats. Light exposes the darkness of sin which causes sinners either to run or repent. In 1 John 1:5,6 we read, “God is Light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.”(NIV)

The tension builds. Some believe, others don’t. “To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”(John 8:31) NIV) Jesus goes on and explains why we can’t give up and give in to sin. “I tell you most solemnly that anyone who chooses a life of sin is trapped in a dead-end life and is, in fact, a slave. A slave is a transient, who can’t come and go at will. The Son, though, has an established position, the run of the house. So if the Son sets you free, you are free through and through.”(John 8:34-36 The Message Bible)

Do you believe this? Remember faith alone saves, but faith is not alone. It is accompanied by obedience. Faith without works is dead,” Are you going to continue to

follow Jesus, live by faith and walk in the light of His Word? Jesus tells us in John 8:51, “I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps My Word, he will never see death.”(NIV) Do you believe this? If so how are you keeping His Word and how is it changing your life?

Those who do not live in the light that Jesus provides are actually enemies of the cross of Christ, who are dwelling in darkness. They are spiritually blind. “Jesus said, ‘For judgment I came into the world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.’”(John 9:39 Revised Standard Version)

John 9 is the chapter where Jesus demonstrates as He heals a man who was born blind that He is also the healer of spiritual blindness. When the disciples see the blind man all they can think of asking is “who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?”(John 9:2 NIV) After all hasn't Jesus been talking about light exposing sin? Here was someone who was blind so the disciples jump to the conclusion somebody must have sinned. Listen to what Jesus said in response. “You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do. We need to be energetically at work for the One whom sent Me here working while the sunshines. When night falls the workday is over. For as long as I am in the world, there is plenty of light. I AM the world's Light”(John 9:3-5TMB)

Jesus goes on and proves He is the Light of the world as “He spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ‘Go,’ He told him, ‘wash in the Pool of Siloam’ (this word means sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.”(John 9:6,7)

Right now you may be hurting. Remember regardless of the reasons for our suffering Jesus has the power to help us to deal with it. When your suffering, instead of asking, “why O Lord” ask Him to give you strength and a clearer perspective on what is happening, and how you can grow closer to Him through it.

The religious establishment once again misses out on the miracle because of their legalistic hang-ups. Jesus had healed the blind man on the Sabbath. That is all the Pharisees could focus on. As his parents back down in fear from these power brokers, the man who was healed boldly stands up to them and because of such a stand he is thrown out. “Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and went and found him. He asked him, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’” The man said, ‘Point him out to me, Sir, so I can believe in Him,’ Jesus said, ‘You're looking right at Him. Don't you recognize My voice?’ ‘Master, I believe,’ the man said, and worshipped Him. Jesus then said, ‘I came into the world to bring everything into the clear light of the day, making all the distinctions clear, so that those who have never seen will see, and those who have made a great pretense of seeing will be exposed as blind.’ Some Pharisees overhead Him and said, ‘Does that mean you're calling us blind?’ Jesus

said, ‘If you were really blind, you would be blameless, but since you claim to see everything so well, you’re accountable for every fault and failure.’” (John 9:35-41 The Message Bible)

In the midst of all the pressure, tension, uncertainty and seemingly hopelessness may we pray, “Lord Jesus help me to see in the midst of all this darkness. You said you ‘came into the world to bring everything into the clear light of the day.’ Now please Lord Jesus let the light of hope come into my confused mind and soul. May I see that you are Lord of all and have promised to never leave me nor forsake me. Also, my Lord Jesus please show me those areas of my life where I am really blinded by pride, self-righteousness and self-centeredness. As you told the Pharisees if I ‘claim to see everything so well,’ I’m ‘accountable for every fault and failure.’ I confess Master of my life and soul, I am blind in so many areas and need your divine light. Please heal O Lord and as you heal me may I have the faith to follow you in obedience and service.”

Now is the time for us to let the Light of God’s Love shine without our hearts. Rejoice you are not alone. God loves you and has a special plan for your life. May we continue to work together in the Light of His Will, reaching out in word and deed to those in need. This week please join me in reading John 10, 11, 12. As you read, ask the Holy Spirit to open the Scriptures to you in order that you may see the Love, and Lordship of Jesus Christ like never before.

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