

Called Out of Darkness

(1 Peter 2:9-10)

Expository Lessons from the First Letter of Peter

I. Background

- a. Peter's first letter focuses a great deal on suffering. He says we should not be surprised that we suffer in various trials. Throughout his letter, he touches on several different types of trials that Christians face.
 - i. We will be refined through trials; they can produce a positive end result.
 - ii. The life of Jesus consisted of suffering in His life, followed by glory.
 - 1. If we are following Him, we should expect to see the same.
- b. In the previous lesson, we discussed three prophecies Peter cites, in which Christ is foreshadowed through a *stone*. Peter refers to Jesus as "the living stone", and points Peter was making were:
 - i. He was the stone *rejected by men*.
 - ii. He was the stone *chosen by God*.
 - iii. He was the stone *precious to God*.
 - iv. He was the stone that caused men to stumble.
 - v. All four of these points regarding Christ, "*the living stone*", also likely will be true of Christians who are becoming like Him. We, as "*living stones*", are being built up into a "spiritual house".

II. Peter Lays Out a Vision of the Church

- a. Read **1 Peter 2:9-10**.
- b. Peter is recalling the words the Lord spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai after the people had departed Egypt and before the 10 Commandments were given.
 - i. Read **Exodus 19:1-8**.
 - 1. The Lord created (and owns) all the earth; all nations.
 - 2. However, the Israelites are called to be God's own special people (out of all the people of the earth).

- ii. Moses recalls those words near the end of their 40 years in the Wilderness. Read **Deuteronomy 7:1-11**.
 - 1. The Lord is a faithful God. He *always keeps* His promises.
 - 2. When the people enter Canaan, they must not become corrupted by the nations of that land. They must remain separate because the Israelites are God's *special people* among all the nations (recalling what the Lord had said back at Mount Sinai, about 40 years earlier).
- iii. The Lord calls the Israelites to be a holy nation, His own special people. However, tis here one condition associated with this promise: The Lord says this will happen, "...***IF*** you will obey My voice and keep my covenant".
 - 1. Of course, they *did not* keep their end of the promise. Just a few weeks after the Lord gives this promise, the people are worshiping and engaging in pagan revelry before the golden calf!
 - 2. The Jews *still* like to refer to themselves as "God's *chosen people*", based on passages like these. However, that promise was conditional. They (those who disobeyed God's covenant and rejected His Christ) are in reality God's rejected people, His cast-away people.
- 3. **Question:** Are there any lessons here for us?
 - a. Read **Romans 11:16-22**.
 - b. The Jews were the original cultivated olive tree, while the Gentiles were a wild olive tree. The Jews (as branches of the original tree) were *broken off and cast away* due to unbelief. In contrast, the Gentiles who had faith were *grafted into* the original tree.
 - c. Paul says we should learn from the Jews getting cut off, so we don't make the same mistake.
 - i. We need to fear God and "continue in His goodness", or we risk getting cut off as well!
 - ii. Our promised relationship with God, as his special people, holy nation, etc. is conditional as well. As Jesus said, we must abide (remain) in Him.

- d. Jesus makes a similar point in His Parable of the Vine and the Branches.
 - i. Read **John 15:1-10**.
 - ii. Our wonderful relationship with God, as His special people, depends on our continuing to obey the commandments of Jesus.
- c. Called out of the darkness, into the light.
 - i. "...that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you *out of darkness into His marvelous light*..." (**1 Peter 2:9**, NKJV)
 - ii. This contrast of spiritual *light versus darkness* is found throughout the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament.
 - iii. Other Scriptures that speak of this light and darkness include:
 - 1. Read **John 1:1-9**.
 - a. Jesus was the light that came into the world, which was in darkness.
 - 2. Read **John 3:18-21**.
 - a. People prefer to remain in the darkness because their deeds are evil (they do not want to deal with having their sins exposed and repenting).
 - b. Those who practice truth will come into the light.
 - 3. Read **John 8:12**.
 - a. "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'" (**John 8:12**, NKJV)
 - 4. Read **John 11:9-10**.
 - a. This happens before Jesus returns to Judea to the tomb of Lazarus, whom he will raise from the dead.
 - b. "Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.'" (**John 11:9-10**, NKJV)

- c. Here Jesus uses the image of a person who is trying to walk somewhere in the dark, who can't see where they are going and therefore stumble.

5. Read **Matthew 4:13-16**.

- a. Jesus was the light that dawned upon those who “sat in darkness”, “in the region of the shadow of death”, as prophesied in **Isaiah 9:1-2**.
- b. Similar to what Zecharias (father of John the Baptist) says in his prayer:
 - i. “Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (**Luke 1:78-79**, NKJV)

6. Read **Ephesians 5:8-16**.

- a. This is after Paul calls the Ephesians to avoid all kinds of sins (fornication, idolatry, covetousness, etc.) if we are to maintain our inheritance in the kingdom of God.
- b. We were once in darkness; now are in light of the Lord.
 - i. This statement by Paul is very similar to what Peter said in **1 Peter 2:9**.
- c. Sleepers are to rise from the dead; Christ will give us light.

7. Read **Romans 13:11-14**.

- a. “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us *cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light*. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” (**Romans 13:11-14**, NKJV)

8. Read **2 Corinthians 4:3-6**.

- a. “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has

blinded, who do not believe, lest the *light of the gospel* of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should *shine on them*.” (2 **Corinthians 4:3–4**, NKJV)

- b. “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God* in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 **Corinthians 4:6**, NKJV)

9. Read **Ephesians 6:12**.

- a. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the *rulers of the darkness of this age*, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (**Ephesians 6:12**, NKJV)
 - i. Satan and the forces of wickedness with him are described as rulers of a *dark* kingdom that we are battling against.

10. Read **Acts 26:12-18**.

- a. Paul is recounting the story of his conversion to King Agrippa.
- b. When Jesus speaks to Paul on the road to Damascus, He says: “I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, *to open their eyes*, in order to turn them *from darkness to light*, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” (**Acts 26:17–18**, NKJV)

- iv. **Question:** In the Scriptures, what does the contrast of “darkness vs. light” (sometimes in the form of “night vs. day” or “blind vs. seeing”) represent?

- 1. Perhaps this refers to more than one single concept. Based on the Scriptures we just read, it seems to me that this can point to the following (inter-related) contrasts:
 - a. Wickedness (moral depravity, sin) versus righteousness;
 - b. Evil versus good;

- c. Satan versus Jesus;
 - d. Lies versus truth; and also
 - e. Ignorance versus true knowledge (enlightenment).
 - i. For an example of this “ignorance vs. knowledge/enlightenment” contrast, I think of **2 Corinthians 4:3-6**; also various references to stumbling around in the dark before the light appears.
2. It seems to me that all of these opposing pairs are inter-related.
- v. Clement of Alexandria, a teacher of the church in Alexandria, Egypt, writing around 195 A.D., commented on this light vs. darkness theme, as related to ignorance versus true knowledge (enlightenment). He had been a student of Greek philosophy and challenged the philosophers and pagan thinkers of his age.
- 1. From a work called *The Stromata*, or *Miscellanies*, Clement wrote:
 - a. “The knowledge of ignorance is, then, the first lesson in walking according to the Word. An ignorant man has sought, and having sought, he finds the teacher; and finding has believed, and believing has hoped; and henceforward having loved, is assimilated to what was loved—endeavoring to be what he first loved. (*Such is the method Socrates shows Alcibiades...*)
 - b. Clement continues, “.... Wise souls, pure as virgins, understanding themselves to be situated amidst the ignorance of the world, kindle the light, and rouse the mind, and illumine the darkness, and dispel ignorance, and seek truth, and await the appearance of the Teacher.”
 - c. (Source: Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*, book 5, chapter 3; found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 2, p. 448)
 - d. Points made by Clement here:
 - i. The first step in becoming wise is to become aware of the extent of your ignorance!

- ii. Then, realizing your ignorance, you need to find yourself a good teacher who can enlighten you.
- iii. Of course, *the ultimate Teacher*, as Jesus explained in **Matthew 23**, is the Christ.
 - 1. “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for *One is your Teacher, the Christ*, and you are all brethren. ...And do not be called teachers; for *One is your Teacher, the Christ*.”
(**Matthew 23:8–10**, NKJV)
- 2. From another work by Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen*:
 - a. “Philosophy, however, as the ancients say, is ‘a long-lived exhortation, wooing the eternal love of wisdom’; while the commandment of the Lord is far-shining, ‘enlightening the eyes.’ (**Psalm 19:8**) Receive Christ, receive sight, receive thy light, ‘In order that you may know well both God and man.’
 - b. “‘Sweet is the Word that gives us light, precious above gold and gems; it is to be desired above honey and the honey-comb.’ (**Psalm 19:10**) For how can it be other than desirable, since it has filled with light the mind which had been buried in darkness, and given keenness to the ‘light-bringing eyes’ of the soul?
 - c. “For just as, had the sun not been in existence, night would have brooded over the universe notwithstanding the other luminaries of heaven; so, had we not known the Word, and been illuminated by Him, we should have been nowise different from fowls that are being fed, fattened in darkness, and nourished for death.
 - d. “Let us then admit the light, that we may admit God; let us admit the light, and become disciples to the Lord. This, too, He has been promised to the Father: ‘I will declare Your name to my brethren; in the midst of the Church will I praise You.’ (**Psalm 22:23 LXX; Hebrews 2:12**) Praise and declare to me your Father God; Your utterances save; Your hymn teaches that hitherto I have wandered in error, seeking God. But since You lead me to the light, O Lord, and I find God through You, and receive the Father from You, I become ‘Your fellow-

heir,' since You 'were not ashamed of me as Your brother.' (**Hebrews 2:11**)

- e. "Let us put away, then, let us put away oblivion of the truth, viz., ignorance; and removing the darkness which obstructs, as dimness of sight, let us contemplate the only true God, first raising our voice in this hymn of praise: Hail, O light! For in us, buried in darkness, shut up in the shadow of death, light has shone forth from heaven, purer than the sun, sweeter than life here below.
- f. "That light is eternal life; and whatever partakes of it lives. But night fears the light, and hiding itself in terror, gives place to the day of the Lord. Sleepless light is now over all, and the west has given credence to the east. For this was the end of the new creation. For 'the Sun of Righteousness,' (**Malachi 4:2**) who drives His chariot over all, pervades equally all humanity, like 'His Father, who makes His sun to rise on all men,' (**Matthew 5:45**) and distils on them the dew of the truth. He hath changed sunset into sunrise, and through the cross brought death to life; and having wrenched man from destruction, He hath raised him to the skies, transplanting mortality into immortality, and translating earth to heaven—He, the husbandman of God..."
- g. (Source: Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen*, chapter 11; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 2, p. 203)
- h. Some take-aways from this quote from Clement:
 - i. Clement gives us a rather memorable analogy of the people of the world (without Christ) as being like geese or other fowl kept in a large, dark barn and just eating (being fattened up) until they are dead.
 - 1. What a disturbing picture of the empty, meaningless existence of those people, who are living in the darkness!
 - ii. Clement implores those living in the darkness of ignorance to come into the light of Christ.

1. He also connects Christ, the one who comes to bring light to the world, as the 'Sun of Righteousness' Who "shall rise with healing in His wings", as prophesied in **Malachi**.

vi. **Lessons for Us:** From this discussion of darkness vs. light:

1. Peter reminds us that we were in darkness before we came to Christ. Never forget where you came from!
 - a. See the world as it really is: the dark and hopeless place we came out of.
 - b. The world has been blinded. People are either sitting or stumbling around in spiritual darkness. They don't know where they are going.
 - c. They don't know where they are headed after their short lives are over.
 - d. They don't know what is true, what is important versus what is completely meaningless and irrelevant.
2. Even the people considered to be 'smartest' or best educated in the world, if they don't know Christ and are not following him, *are in the dark*.
3. Evangelism, as Jesus explained to Paul, is simply showing the light to people in darkness.
 - a. There is a cost to turning on the light (repentance, rejection by many people).
 - b. Some will prefer to stay in the dark.
 - c. It's not that we are *better than* others. We came out of the same darkness, but now we have the light.
 - d. Our enemy is Satan and the forces of darkness with him.
 - e. We should use the weapons of light in our spiritual war (Word of God, truth, prayer).
 - f. We need to be living as children of the light, in righteousness and confessing our sins.
 - g. As alluded to by Peter, and as Jesus explained to Paul, evangelism is the process of opening up the eyes of

those who are lost in spiritual darkness, “turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God” (**Acts 26:18**).