

EXPERIENCING GOD AS LIGHT

by Ed Marks

In the first chapter of his first Epistle, the apostle John tells us that God is light and that we are to walk in the light (vv. 5-7). To walk in the light is to continually experience God as light by living, moving, and having our entire being in the light. “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (v. 5). Light is the presence of God. This is a simple yet profound definition of what light is. In the physical world, one cannot live without light. In the spiritual world, one cannot live without being in the presence of God, the divine light. When we believed in the crucified and resurrected Christ, calling upon His name to receive Christ as our life and Savior, Christ, the very God, shined into us, and the divine light, the presence of God, was installed in us. We were begotten of God (John 1:12-13), the divine light, to be children of light, even light itself. “You were once darkness but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8). Light begets light, producing the children of light, making the believers, in their oneness with God, the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). Darkness is the absence of the presence of God. Where God’s presence is absent, Satan is reigning with the authority of darkness (Col. 1:13). Where God’s presence resides, God is reigning and darkness is overcome. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5).

All who have had the salvation experience can testify of being called out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). When Paul spoke of his salvation experience, he spoke of the divine light shining in his heart to bring him out of darkness—“Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). Paul used the picture of God commanding the light to shine out of the physical darkness in the genesis of the old creation in order to reveal how the divine light shines out of the spiritual darkness into God’s chosen ones for the genesis of the new creation. Genesis 1:2 says, “The earth was without form and an empty waste, and darkness was upon the face of the very great deep. The Spirit of God was moving, (hovering, brooding) over the

face of the waters” (Amplified Bible). This describes our condition before the divine light shined into our hearts. Our inner being was an empty waste, and darkness was reigning over us, but thank the Lord, the Spirit of God was brooding over us.

Deuteronomy 32:11 likens God to an eagle brooding over the young. Even before our salvation, God the Spirit was brooding over us to cause us to repent, to turn us from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). When we turned, the Spirit’s brooding issued in God’s commanding: “And God said, Let there be light; and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). “The God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine” (2 Cor. 4:7), spoke Himself as light into our being, and there, in our inward being, was light. He beamed forth into our being, and an inward illumination took place within us that we might know the glory of God in the face of Christ. The face of Christ is the face of God, which is the presence of God, and the presence of God, which is the light of God, is our indwelling treasure.

What a wonder it is when we are regenerated and the presence of God comes into us! D. L. Moody once said that regeneration is the greatest miracle. When the presence of God as light came into us, the eyes of our heart were opened for the first time to see the invisible God (cf. Heb. 11:27). Regretfully, after such a wonderful beginning, many believers do not walk in this divine light. They do not maintain their spiritual life by living in the light, the light which overcomes all darkness. Thank the Lord that we do not have to live in darkness or under its authority. Although we were once darkness, we are now light in the Lord; therefore, Paul charges us to walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8).

In the book of Isaiah, God’s call is for His people to come out of darkness and walk in the light of the Lord: “House of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of Jehovah” (2:5). To walk in the light is to be controlled, directed, and led by the light to bring forth what Paul calls “the fruit of

the light” (Eph. 5:9). This fruit is the expression of the divine light within us for the manifestation of God in our daily life. Proverbs 4:18 says that our Christian path should be like the dawning light, which shines brighter and brighter until the full day, the day of the Lord’s second coming. We need to pray that the phrase *brighter and brighter* becomes a description of our Christian life.

We can only enjoy Christ as our God-given portion when we are in the light. He is “the allotted portion of the saints in the light” (Col. 1:12). As we have pointed out, God Himself is light (1 John 1:5). Christ, who is the incarnated and manifested God, also declared, “I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). John 1:4 says, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Thus, God is light, Christ is light, and the life of Christ is light. God is in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19), Christ is our life (Col. 3:4), and as the light He dwells within us. Our spirit is the lamp of the Lord (Prov. 20:27), and the Lord is the light installed in our spirit through our regeneration. In order to enjoy this installed and indwelling light, we need to stay in constant contact with God, continually follow Christ, and always appropriate the life of Christ in our spirit.

Christ is the life-giving Spirit indwelling our spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22), and as the Spirit He has been intensified sevenfold. Revelation 1:4 speaks of the seven Spirits, and 4:5 says that these seven Spirits of God are the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne. The Spirit is likened here to the seven lamps of the golden lampstand. God the Spirit is one in essence and existence, just as there is one lampstand, but in His function and work He is sevenfold, just as there are seven lamps. This Spirit as the seven lamps of fire dwells within our spirit, and our spirit is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the rooms of our inner being. A lamp of light with sevenfold intensity now dwells in our spirit. Witness Lee has the following to say regarding this:

The final expression of the golden lampstand is the seven lamps, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Our own spirit is also the lamp of God (Prov. 20:27). These two spirits, ours and God’s, have been mingled. Within our little lamp there is now also another lamp of greater intensity.

The function of a lamp is to shine. According to J. N. Darby’s footnote, Proverbs 20:27 can be rendered, “Man’s spirit is the lamp of Jehovah, searching all the chambers of the soul.” Before we were saved, our spirit was dead; the light of the lamp was extinguished. All our movements were under the direction of the soul. Our thinking and our doing were according to our whims. One

day, however, the light of the gospel shined into us, and the lamp of greater intensity was placed in us. The spirit’s function revived. We repented and confessed our sins, enlightened by the conscience within our spirit. With our spirit enlivened, and the lamp of God’s Spirit added to our spirit, it became very bright within.

The light now searches all the inward parts of the soul. Under its twofold shining, we can see that the thoughts we were so sure of are wrong; that we loved what we should hate, and hated what we should love; that our joys and sorrows were for the wrong things; and that our intentions and decisions were wrong. Under the intensity of this light, we confess and repent to the Lord. (*Life Messages* 247-248)

In order to be transformed in our inner being, we must keep ourselves fully opened to the Lord for His enlightening and His shining. God has given us three divine provisions as a practical way to remain in the enjoyment of His shining presence. These divine provisions are the word of God, the children of God, and the church of God. Psalm 119:105 says that His word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, and verse 130 says that the opening of His words gives light. Matthew 5:14 says that the children of God are the light of the world, and Revelation 1:20 says that the churches of God are the golden lampstands, shining in this dark age with the light of the presence of God.

In order to walk in the divine light, we must build up a habit of coming to Christ in God’s Word every day. Just as the ages without the Bible were the Dark Ages, a day without the Bible is a dark day, a day in darkness. We need to thank the Lord for those who paid a great price, even that of martyrdom, to translate the Bible into the common languages of man. What a mercy it is to have “the Book” in our possession, and what a tragedy it is to neglect reading it! This book, “the Book,” is the only book that can be a light to us in this world of darkness. In Deuteronomy 17 Moses enjoins the ruler of God’s people to read God’s word “all the days of his life” (v. 19). This is so that he will learn to reverently fear the Lord so that he will not be spoiled by pride and so that God’s word will be the guiding light of his life (vv. 19-20). As we daily read God’s word in a spirit and atmosphere of prayer, He has a way to shine within us and keep our feet on the path of His heart’s desire so that we may reign in His life (Rom. 5:17).

Because the children of God have been born of God, who is light, they are the children of light, as the Lord said, “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). We can maintain our spiritual existence in the divine light by exercising to be those who shine as luminaries in this world of darkness by holding forth the word of life (Phil. 2:15-16).

To hold forth the word of life is to apply, present, offer, and minister God's word to others by living out Christ. It is in this way that we let our light shine before men. As described in the book of Acts, Peter and his fellow apostles were people who shined forth the light of the gospel in their living and speaking. After they had been cast into prison for their testimony of Christ, "an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison, and leading them out, said, Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life" (5:19-20). We need to notice the words *this life*, especially the word *this*. The angel was able to point out to Peter the divine life which he was living out and speaking forth. Peter's life and work made the divine life so real and present in his situation that even the angel saw and pointed out this reality. This was Peter's experience of shining as a luminary by living out Christ. Our gospel is our living, and what we speak should be what we live. We speak Christ because we live Christ, and such a living and speaking are our shining. Our shining is our gospel.

Watchman Nee, in an article entitled "Self-knowledge and God's Light," says the following concerning the believers' being the light of the world with their shining function:

A Christian can illuminate the true condition of a man. Many Christians who are in the light of God make other Christians afraid of seeing them because once they are seen, they will be condemned of their own sins. A weak Christian is not afraid of seeing another Christian who is in the same condition. But when you come close to a Christian who is in the light of God, you feel shameful. You were proud, but after being shined upon by him, you feel shameful. You were dishonest, but after being shined upon by Him, you feel shameful. Brothers and sisters, we are the workers of God, serving God. If you do not have the light of God, you will not be able to work. People cannot be drawn closer to God by you if you do not have the light to illuminate them. If you draw near to God and are controlled constantly by the light of God, spontaneously you will illuminate the real condition of the people who are contacting you. If we want to obey the will of God and do the work of God, we need to be a light. (234)

In order to remain in the shining of God and to shine out God, we need to keep ourselves in the fellowship of the Body of Christ. The local churches, as the expression of the one Body, are the golden lampstands (Rev. 1:11-12, 20). Whenever we come to a proper gathering of the Lord's children, we are brought into the light of God.

Psalm 73, a psalm of Asaph, provides us with a marvelous picture of this. In the first sixteen verses of this psalm, Asaph is in a quandary of darkness. "But as for me, my feet were nearly turned aside; / My steps had almost slipped. / For I was envious of the arrogant, / When I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (vv. 2-3). In the darkness of his understanding, Asaph exposes his thoughts of envy at the wicked ones' seeming prosperity and the godly ones' undue suffering. His conclusion in his darkness was that he had purified his heart in vain and that while the wicked were prospering and at ease in the world, he was "plagued all day long / And chastened every morning" (vv. 12-14). He could not speak to anyone about his troublesome thoughts because he knew that this would betray God's children (v. 15). The more he considered this in order to understand it, the more vexed and troubled he became.

The turning point in this Psalm is seen in verse 17, where the psalmist declares, "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; / Then I perceived their end." The sanctuary of God, the dwelling place of God, in the reality of the New Testament is the church, which is the

In the proper church there is
the presence of God as light.
As we open up to the fellowship of
other pursuing Christians,
who are the children of light,
the divine light shines within us to
dispel all our darkness.

house of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). We may find ourselves in darkness, with seemingly unsolvable problems and vexing dilemmas, *until* we come to the church, and to come to the church is to come to the meetings of the church. In the proper church, symbolized by the golden lampstand, there is the presence of God as light. As we open up to the fellowship of other pursuing Christians, who are the children of light, the divine light shines within us to dispel all our darkness and clear up our darkened considerations of the enigmas of human existence.

After the psalmist went into the sanctuary of God, he was brought out of darkness into light. He was enlightened to see that the destiny of the wicked is terrible. He was enlightened to see that in his darkened state and considerations apart from God, he was brutish and knew nothing, even admitting that he was like a beast before God (Psa. 73:18-22). He was also enlightened, enthralled, and captured by the presence of God to realize that God was his unique desire and his eternal portion: "Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth. / My flesh

and my heart fail, / But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever” (vv. 25-26). All of this takes place by entering into the sanctuary of God, by entering into the fellowship of the church in the meetings of the church, the enlightening lampstand.

As we remain in the divine fellowship with God and with our fellow believers, we keep ourselves in the light and in the reality of four items which constitute a spiritual cycle in our Christian life: the divine life, the divine fellowship, the divine light, and the blood of Jesus, the Son of God (1 John 1:2-9). The more we enjoy the divine life, the more fellowship we participate in. This fellowship is the flow of the divine life within us, the flow of the inner river of water of life (Rev. 22:1). As we remain in the divine fellowship, the inner flow of life, we are brought more into the divine light of life. As we remain in the light of life, our being and conduct are exposed, we confess our sins in the light of God’s presence, and we are forgiven and cleansed of all our unrighteousness (1 John 1:7, 9).

Our experience of the cleansing of the blood issues in our gaining more abundant life, which issues in more divine fellowship, which issues in more divine light and deepens our need of the precious blood of Christ. As we keep ourselves in the spiritual cycle of the life, the fellowship, the light, and the blood, God has a free way to grow within us, operate within us, and shine out of us for His expression.

The divine light, the presence of God, in whom we live, functions in a number of ways within us. In the divine light of God’s presence, we receive a revelation of who Christ is. “In Your light we see light” (Psa. 36:9). In the divine light, the eyes of our heart are enlightened to see the person and riches of Christ in the divine and mystical realm (Eph. 1:17-18). Also, as we have pointed out, the divine light exposes and reproves us. “All things which are reprov’d are made manifest by the light; for everything that makes manifest is light” (5:13). To be in the divine light and to see our true condition in the light of God’s presence is a great blessing, because the light that exposes is also the light that supplies. This light is the light of life (John 8:12).

The divine light shining in our inner being brings the divine supply of life to our inner being. Whenever we are truly in the light of God’s presence to see our sinful condition, as we confess our sins, we are being supplied with Christ as life. The divine light also heals us as God is shining into our inward parts. We are speaking here of an inward healing, the healing of the wounds and scars in our disturbed mind, our troubled emotions, and our weary will. The Christ who dwells within us is the rising sun, the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings

(Luke 1:78-79; Mal. 4:2). The divine light that heals us inwardly also functions to kill all the negative things in our being. Whenever we see our shortcomings under God’s shining, these shortcomings are killed immediately. Thus, God as the divine light is the revealing light, the exposing light, the supplying light, the healing light, and the killing light. Whenever we are in the light and walk in the light, we experience all of the functions of the light simultaneously.

A marvelous picture of this experience can be seen in Isaiah 6. In the divine light and in the midst of his depression, Isaiah saw a vision of Christ in glory. John 12:41 says that Isaiah “saw His glory and spoke concerning Him.” Isaiah said, “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting on a high and lofty throne” (Isa. 6:1). Among the kings of Israel, Uzziah was a good king; his death was a depressing event for God’s prophet. But in the shining of the divine light, he saw that the Lord was sitting on the throne.

He saw that in the midst of the satanic chaos on earth, the heavens still rule (cf. Dan. 4:26). As a result of seeing this vision and of being brought into the holy shining presence of the Christ of glory, Isaiah was exposed, realizing that he was a man of unclean lips, dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips. This light also performed a killing function as Isaiah declared that he was terminated, finished: “Woe is me, for I am finished!” (Isa. 6:5). Here we have Isaiah’s experience of God as the revealing light, the exposing light, and the killing light.

The divine light enlightens us, exposes us, supplies us with life, and kills in us all that is not of God. This issues in our being purged and cleansed by God; this is the healing function of the divine light. After Isaiah realized that he was unclean, he was purged by one of the seraphim, signifying the holiness of God (vv. 6-7, 2-3). Thus, his iniquity was taken away, his sin was purged, and he received a commission from the Triune God: “Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?” (v. 8). Isaiah responded to the divine “Us” by saying, “Here am I; send me” (v. 8). Our experience of the revealing, exposing, killing, and healing light of God issues in His sending us to preach the gospel of the illuminating and shining glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4).

We need to remain in personal and intimate fellowship with the One who is the light of the world, following Him inwardly and daily so that we might have Him as the light of life: “I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). We need to keep our hearts single toward the Lord, taking Him as the unique goal of our life so that our inward being would be full of light, not

having any dark part and so that “the whole will be full of light as when the lamp with its rays illuminates you” (Luke 11:33-36). If we sense that we are in darkness, we need to repent by turning our hearts to the Lord and making Him the preeminent One in our being, giving Him the first place in all the affairs of our personal life and family life. We also need to take heed to the following passage in Isaiah as an exhortation and warning:

Who among you fears Jehovah; / Who hears the voice of His servant; / Who walks in darkness / And has no light? / Let him trust in the name of Jehovah, / And rely on his God. / Indeed, all of you who kindle a fire, / Who surround yourselves with firebrands, / Walk into the light of your fire / And into the firebrands which you have lit. / You will have this from My hand: / You will lie down in torment. (50:10-11)

Witness Lee points out the following concerning these verses:

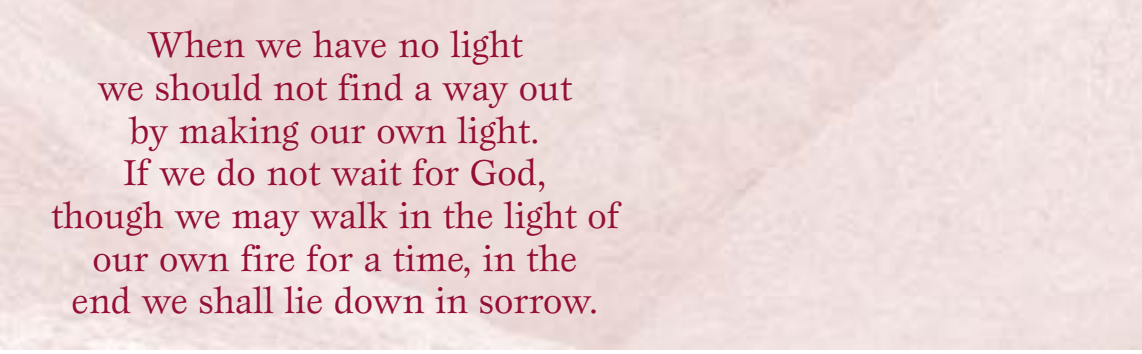
In the entire Bible, this is the passage which speaks most clearly concerning the matter of being enlightened. On one hand, it points out to us the proper way: if we fear God, obey God's voice, and suddenly fall into darkness and have no light, we should not do anything but trust in the name of the Lord, rely upon our God, and wait for the light of God to shine. This is because only God is light, only God is the source of light, and only in the light of God can we see light. On the other hand, this verse also warns us that when we have no light we should not find a way out ourselves by kindling a fire or making our own light. For if we do not wait for God, but instead gird ourselves about with self-made light, though we may walk in the light of our own fire for a time, in the end we shall lie down in sorrow....

Those among us who fear God, hear His voice and encounter darkness, should remember not to do anything but trust in God, rely upon God, look wholeheartedly to Him, wait quietly on Him, and seek His mercy once more. Whenever God comes, whenever God bestows mercy, the light of His countenance is our light, His appearing is our vision, and His presence is our gain. (*Knowledge* 207-208).


The following marvelous hymn written by Charles Wesley as a prayer for Christ as light should also be our prayer:

- 1 Christ, whose glory fills the skies
Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of Righteousness, arise,
Triumph o'er the shades of night;
Dayspring from on high, be near,
Daystar, in my heart appear.
- 2 Dark and cheerless is the morn
Unaccompanied by Thee;
Joyless is the day's return,
Till Thy mercy's beams I see,
Till Thou inward light impart,
Glad my eyes, and warm my heart.
- 3 Visit then this soul of mine,
Pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
Fill me, Radiance divine,
Scatter all my unbelief;
More and more Thyself display,
Shining to the perfect day. (*Hymns*, #366)

As we experience God as light, walking in the light day by



When we have no light
we should not find a way out
by making our own light.
If we do not wait for God,
though we may walk in the light of
our own fire for a time, in the
end we shall lie down in sorrow.

day, so that we may corporately shine Him out for His radiant expression in this dark age as His churches, the golden lampstands, we will hasten the day of His coming, when we will fully be prepared to be His bride, the New Jerusalem, the city of light and the kingdom of light for the full expression of God as light (Rev. 21:11). 

Works Cited

- The Amplified Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
- Hymns*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1985.
- Lee, Witness. *The Knowledge of Life*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1973.
- . *Life Messages*. Vol. 2. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1979.
- Nee, Watchman. “Self-knowledge and God's Light.” *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*. Vol. 9. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1992. 217-250.