

I. Introduction

- A. John 12:32-41 . . . "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." [33] But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. [34] The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man (vs 23) must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" [35] So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. [36] While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. [37] But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. [38] This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" [39] For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, [40] "He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them." [41] These things Isaiah said because he saw [God's] glory, and he spoke of Him.
- B. Today, we will consider the meaning of these words, "Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes." Then we will look at Jesus' statement, "Believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." And finally we will consider the statement, "[God] has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them." But before getting to our focus for today, I will make one more comment on vs 32.
- C. Prayer

II. Lifted Up, Son of man

- A. John 12:32 . . . And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.
1. I pointed out last week that even though Jesus said his being crucified would draw all men to Himself, it does not mean that everyone will repent and believe unto salvation.

2. And I explained last week that the same idea of all being drawn but only some being converted is found in Matthew 7:13-14, where Jesus says, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. [14] [But] the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."
 - a. Notice, in speaking of the wide gate, Jesus says many enter, that is, many go through the gate and travel the broad way.
 - b. But in speaking of the narrow gate, Jesus says only a few find it, which infers that the number who enter in and travel the narrow way is less than the number of those who find it. In this same way, the cross invites all to come to repentance and faith in Jesus, but only some come.
- B. However, there is another explanation that is well worth bringing to your attention.
 1. When Jesus said His crucifixion would draw all men to Himself, He could have meant what is clearly stated in Revelation 5:9, "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain (*lifted up*), and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. It is not every man, but men from every people group.'"
 2. In other words, the ALL MEN could mean people will come to repentance and faith from every people group in the world.

III. Walk in the light so as not to be overtaken by the darkness

- A. As I stated earlier, the first thing I want us to consider is Jesus' statement from vs 35, "Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes."
 1. In John 8:12, Jesus identified Himself as the Light of the world, and went on to say that those who follow Him will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.
 2. When Jesus says He is the Light of the world, I believe He means it in two obvious ways.
 - a. The first way Jesus means it is that in and of himself, He is the Light of the world – and we come to know Him and grow in knowing Him as the Light by trusting Him, repenting of and removing whatever stands in the way of knowing Him intimately, by following Him, and by repeatedly interacting with Him.
 - b. The second way Jesus is the Light of the world is through His teachings, that is, through the living and active Word of God that

is sharper than any two edged sword – able to expose what is in the darkness, and what evil's lurk in the world, and what is in our hearts and minds, and our words and behavior – be it good or evil. Of course, these teachings are found in the four Gospels and affirmed in the rest of the NT.

- B. Therefore, to walk in the Light so that darkness will not overtake you, is to live according to the Light.
1. And to live according to the Light is to pattern your character and attitudes after the character and attitudes of Jesus. It is to humbly submit to God, just as Jesus humbly submitted to God. It is to follow Jesus' example of close, intimate, and ongoing fellowship with God. It is to love like Jesus loved, and to show mercy and compassion in the same ways Jesus showed mercy and compassion. And it is to speak the truth as clearly and forthrightly as Jesus did.
 2. However, living according to the Light also includes living according to the teachings of Jesus and the rest of God's word. To do this, you must read, study, and ponder the word of God. You must evaluate your behavior by the truths, values, principles, and standard of godliness taught in the Bible. You must apply what you are learning, in the most practical ways possible and to as many areas of your life as possible, so that you are progressively growing in Christ-likeness.
 3. Therefore, to walk in the Light of Christ as we ought to walk results in being progressively conformed to the likeness of Christ so as to grow into a mature Christian whose spirituality is of the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).
 4. This is our protection from being overtaken by darkness, that is, overtaken by a single sin or a number of sins, or ungodly desires, or irrational fears, or worldly ways, or the devil's temptations.
- C. Now notice Jesus' words in vs 35, He doesn't say darkness will conquer us in a moment of time, but rather He says that darkness will overtake us and prevent us from seeing where we are going.
1. What I am asking you to see here is that just like spiritual growth, the growth and practice of evil is progressive. For example, for darkness to overtake you, it must catch up to you, and then envelop you, and then conquer and consume you.
 2. To my knowledge, no one begins life as totally evil, but rather we become increasingly evil – that is increasingly overtaken by darkness, as we give way to such things as self-centeredness, fleshly passions, unfounded and irrational fears, the world's allurements, and the

devil's temptations. In other words, just as growth in godliness is progressive over time, so growth in evil is progressive over time.

- a. We see the truth of this in God's determination to prevent darkness from progressing in Israel by including in the Mosaic Law the requirement that those who knowingly and deliberately break the Law are to be driven out of the nation or put to death. We tend to see this as punishment for sins committed, but it was God's way of deterring the growth of sin and future sinners.
 - b. A review of Sampson's life affirms the progressive nature of darkness in a person's life when that person is not walking in or living according to the light.
 - c. Paul affirms the progressive nature of darkness in Romans 1:18-32, where he shows how turning away from God began with an unwillingness to honor Him as God and be thankful. And this progressed to idol worship – and all the debauchery included in idol worship, which over time grew to include the degrading passions of homosexuality.
3. However, darkness is not only progressive, growing from bad to worse, it blinds us so that we cannot see where we are or where we are going. In other words, darkness effects our thinking and reasoning so as to progressively make us foolish, irrational, in denial of reality, and ultimately outright stupid.
- a. Now it is true that sinners are convinced they know where they are going, why they are going there, and why it is best for them to go there.
 - b. And yet, they are as blind or unwilling to face the truth as Pinocchio, who knew he wanted to go to Pleasure Island and knew how to get there. But he was so blinded by the pleasures of the island that he did not see that he was turning into a donkey to be used as slave labor in the owner's mines.
 - c. So yes, while in the darkness we may think we know where we are going, but the reality is, we don't. And the reality is, we will not wind up where we thought we were headed.
4. In his first letter, John addresses this truth in this way, "The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him (*in other words, he can see where he is going*). But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes (1 John 2:9-11).

5. And Paul provides an excellent example of being overtaken by darkness while thinking we know where we are going. We read about this in 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, “We speak wisdom among those who are mature (*that is, walking in sufficient light to understand it*); a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; [7] but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; [8] the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”
 - a. As you know, the rulers of this age were convinced they knew where killing Jesus would take them, but they were wrong. And they wound up at a destination far different from where they thought they were headed.
 - b. This is the power of darkness to blind us to the truth, to cripple our thinking, and to lead us where we don't intend to go or even want to go.
6. Therefore, beware of the slow, creeping destruction of darkness with its equally slow progression of blindness. What we might think is a small sin or a minor indiscretion or a way of the world that hardly affects us, in reality it opens the door to more small sins and minor indiscretions and seemingly insignificant ways of the world, which then slowly accumulate and progressively blind us to the truth. Let us avoid this calamity by walking in the Light.

IV. Believe in the Light in order to become sons of Light

- A. The second thing I want to talk about today comes from John 12:36 . . . “Believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.”
 1. It is my understanding that as long as you have life, and can think and reason, you can repent, turn from your sin, trust in Jesus, believe in the Light, and begin walking in the Light.
 2. We know this was true for the thief who was crucified along with Jesus and asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus came in His kingdom. And as you recall, Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:42-43).
 3. Therefore, as long as there is Light in this world, there is opportunity for sinners to come to their senses, repent, believe, and become sons of Light.
- B. But what I want to emphasize today is the connection between believing in the Light and becoming sons of Light.

1. To become a son of Light is to become a child of God, a born again believer, a person who looks so much like Jesus that he is recognized as being a son of God, along with Jesus – who, as Paul says, is the first born among many brethren (Romans 8:29).
 2. In other words, we become sons of God when we believe in the Light, and as we know from the rest of scripture, believing in the Light or in Christ includes living according to the character and life and teachings of the Light.
- C. There is one more point I want to make here. To be recognized by others as a son of Light, we must have the family resemblance, which we can only have by living enough like Jesus Christ to resemble Jesus Christ.
1. Born again believers were first labeled “Christians” in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Why? Because the way they lived resembled the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.
 2. Sadly, the label “Christian” is often used today to identify one’s religion rather than one’s life-style. May we live in such a way that those observing us will make the connection between the way we live and the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

V. Why God blinds eyes and hardens hearts

- A. The last thing we will consider today is why God makes it harder for unbelievers to come to faith by blinding their eyes and hardening their hearts.
1. We read about this in John 12:39-40 . . . For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, [40] "He has blinded their eyes and he hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them."
 2. This activity is not only found during Christ’s life or in Isaiah, it is found in other places in the Bible – such as with Pharaoh. And it seems that we have a hard time making sense of why God does this.
- B. However, if we look at the scripture as a whole, we see there are three parties responsible for the unbeliever’s blindness and hardness of heart.
1. Here in vs 39-40, we see that it is God who has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart.
 2. In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, we see that the god of this world is responsible for blinding the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.
 3. And in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, we see the unbeliever is the one who thinks the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Christ is actually the stench of death – and so is responsible for turning away from it.

- C. Therefore, though we tend to see God as being solely responsible and hence unreasonable in blinding sinner's eyes and hardening their hearts, He is not alone in this activity. The devil and the sinner are also active in blinding the eyes and hardening the heart to the truth of God.
1. In addition, God's word reveals that God only blinds the eyes and hardens the hearts of those sinners who have knowingly turned away from the truth, deliberately rejected God, are intentionally practicing sin, and have been living this way for a number of years.
 2. For example, the Jews of Jesus day, and especially the religious leaders, claimed Abraham as their father, and yet they were not living a life of faith and faithful obedience toward God. And they hadn't been for many years.
 - a. Their rejection of Jesus was not a new act of rebellion against God, but one more act in a life of ongoing rebellion against God and the teachings of scripture.
 - b. In other words, they themselves were at least the first or second cause for their blindness and hardness of heart – depending on which place you give the devil.
 - c. And this means that God's actions were only part of the cause behind their blindness and hardness of heart, rather than the sole or even primary cause of it.
- D. But why would God make it harder for repetitive, rebellious sinners to repent, come to faith in Jesus Christ, and be saved?
1. I believe this is part of His judgment on sinners who for years and years have lived in willful, deliberate sin while rejecting God and the truth they know.
 2. And though part of God's punishment of the religious leaders of Jesus' day was to add to their blindness and hardness of heart, there is no indication that this addition prevented them from coming to repentance and faith – though it did make it much harder.
 3. In other words, they would have to want God and God's ways enough to zealously fight against themselves, their religious culture, the influences of the world, and the devil's temptations to get past their self-inflicted, devil enhanced, and God increased blindness and hardness of heart. Coming to faith would not be easy, but it would be possible.
- E. I want to close by reminding you of two truths in God's word that remain true in spite of God blinding eyes and hardening hearts. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous who need no repentance.