

“How great is that darkness.” These words are spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 6:23 as part of a series of allegories addressing hypocrisy and double mindedness or as we say today “riding the fence.” These teachings continued into chapter seven where He speaks plainly about hypocrisy or acting, when He discoursed on judging with hypocrisy. In John 7:24 He tells us to judge righteously. The word hypocrisy is a Greek word that was not translated in the bible. It is a common part in the English language now. It simply means to act like someone you are not.

We find in the scriptures that God used many allegories to convey truths and concepts. In other words He uses something in the natural to convey something spiritual. For example, in baptism we are dipped under water and stand again out of the water to represent the old self with its sinful ways dead and buried and a new creature rising to new life.

In the book of Matthew Jesus is trying to get us to see the difference between walking in truth and living a lie. Hypocrisy can have two sides. We could intentionally be pretending we are someone we are not or we could be riding the fence in ignorance, not seeing our true self, not being aware of our own actions. So, in Matthew 6:22-23 we have an allegory about hypocrisy. “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” Light and darkness is one of the main themes of the Bible. God uses light to describe Himself and the life and understanding that He gives. He uses darkness to describe sin and death and ignorance. In this allegory the eye is used as the object lesson. The eye is where the body and mind detect light. All that we see is a reflection of the light that is in a room or what is outside under the sun, the light reflecting off the object. The more light the clearer the object. We all know, for example, that it is easier to read with more light. So, light enters the body through the eye. Part of the allegory is that whatever the circumstance in life God will shed His light on it and show us the right way of doing things if that is what we are seeking to do. Jesus explains that if the light that comes through the eye is single the whole body is full of light. What does He mean single? He contrasts this with the next verse, “if your eye is evil”; evil and single. Notice he does not say blurred or bad. It is the Greek word *proneeros* and is always translated evil. Bad or blurred would be appropriate because that would hinder the light

from coming into the body, but Jesus wants to make the meaning of the allegory clear. He is shedding light, ironically. He is calling hypocrisy and self-induced ignorance evil.

The book of James will shed much light on this subject. After all, the whole subject matter of James is hypocrisy and some common sense remedies for it. James chapter 1 begins with faith and wisdom. He tells us in verse 8 “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> For do not let that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup> *he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” Double minded or double souled as some translate it, is talking about someone who is trying to live on both sides of the fence and is unstable because sometimes he chooses light and other times he chooses darkness. He sees light and he wants it, but he sees the dark and he wants that too. This kind of lifestyle will be full of contradictions and hypocrisy. To someone without the light of God this life is normal. To someone who has seen the light, they will begin to see a difference between day and night. The question is, will they choose the light and walk in it? If so, they will receive more light. If not, they will just ignore the contradictions and keep riding the fence.

The context of James chapter 1 is faith and wisdom and avoiding sin. If we believe what God has revealed to us and walk in that truth He will give us wisdom and strength so that we are able to do it. If we continue in sin and darkness our faith is empty and we will not get wisdom. We will be like the man in verses 23-24, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; <sup>24</sup> for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.” By the way there are many obvious advantages for walking in the light; 1John 1:6-7, Galatians 5:16, Romans 8:4, In Ephesians 5:8 we are commanded to “walk as children of light.” Be single minded. Be Honest with yourself. You can pretend you don’t see or that it really doesn’t matter. You’re not fooling God, only yourself. If you call yourself Christian you have already put yourself on a higher standard, especially if you have been baptized. You have proclaimed to everyone that you are a new creation. You entered into a covenant with God. You have said to Him, I will walk in the light. So, Jesus is

saying in the parable to make sure your eye is good, letting the light into the body. Whatever is blocking the light get it out, even if it is a log. Continue to allow God to work in you. Let Him give wisdom and walk in it. You may make mistakes, but be honest.

Now, what about darkness? Ephesians 5:1-14 spells it out very clear. This is very important to read because the scriptures contrast light and darkness and explains that we are the children of light and not children of disobedience. We should not partake with them. We should walk in the Spirit and if we are in darkness, wake up! In verse 11, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Ephesians reminds us of who we are and who we are not. The kind of sin mentioned in these verses should not be part of our lives anymore. It tell us to walk in the Spirit, in the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:16 "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." This is a simple remedy and may be hard to do. It takes practice just like anything else. We have to put on kindness and patience and self-control. Take God's covenant serious. He does, He shed his blood for it. Walk in the light as He is in the light.

There is a similar scripture in 2Corinthians 6:14-18 "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup>And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup>And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people."<sup>17</sup>Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.<sup>18</sup>I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty." How could an unbeliever be able to influence us? What danger could an unbeliever pose, if any? The Old Testament sheds some light.

Deuteronomy 7:3-6, "Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. <sup>4</sup>For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. <sup>5</sup>But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire."<sup>6</sup>"For you *are* a holy people to the LORD

your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. <sup>7</sup>The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples." History has shown us all, even in our own lives, that other people have an influence over us. Just think about when you spend a lot of time with someone, maybe at work or with a friend. Notice how much you start talking like them. I don't mean cursing, necessarily, but catch phrases and accents and the way you say certain words. There are countless ways to be influenced and some people are more susceptible than others. It depends on the situation and circumstance. A marriage is where there can be a huge amount of influence. Much time is spent with a spouse and there is the added fact that you enjoy their company and their personality. An unbelieving spouse could have more influence than you think. It all depends on the things you agree and disagree on. Where do you make your stand, if any? One common problem I see quite often is that many Christians think they are far more mature in the ways of God than they actually are. They are being influenced and don't even know it. The world can be very subtle. Instead of seeing light and darkness they see a lot of gray. This is why God designed the Church so we can come together and be influenced by each other and God's Word.

Young people especially can be easily to influence. This is one reason the military takes 18 year olds. It is harder to mold a soldier out of a 25 or 30 year old person. An older person has too much experience and is starting to get set in their ways. For younger people the lure of the desires of the flesh and world can be extremely strong. Those desires take time to change. Since God is the one who changes desires, how can the process take place if someone else is interfering and distracting the Christian from really seeking God? 2Timothy 2:22 gives some advice, "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Lamentations 3:25-28 also speaks to the young person, "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly, for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth." Listen to wisdom young person. It's harder to change when you are old. Jeremiah is talking about being yoked to God.

We need to be around people who are helping us. Ask the question. If a person is not helping me are they a hindrance? Life is short, we need all the time to change we can get. We need that time for God to develop the fruit of the Spirit in us. This doesn't mean we shouldn't have unbelieving friends or be involved with people who need our help. How much time do we spend with them is the question? We need to be honest with ourselves, are they influencing us or are we influencing them? For young people this can be especially trying and confusing. Young people like to socialize and be around friends more so than 30 and older for the simple fact that when you get older you get more set in your ways, you settle down and like to be at home. There are all sorts of nice and friendly people who will still draw us away from God or at least slow our progress for going toward Him.

Of course, it is not the people at all who take us from God. It all comes down to our desire for them and what they are doing. This was the main point of Adam's problem. It was his desire for his wife that caused him to sin. The reason why we can know and understand this is because of what Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane. He reversed what Adam did. He said, "father, not my will but yours be done." As you know it is not just the act of the sin that is offensive but also the desire and intent of the heart that offends God. So, the first Adam said in his heart "not your will but mine be done. That's what Adam did when he chose his wife instead of God. He really chose himself, he chose his own desires. If we are not careful we can slowly or even be quickly turned away from God.

Walking in the light is the analogy that God has given us. 2Corinthians 6 equates being yoked with an unbeliever as having communion with darkness. Look at verse 17, "Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." God has provided a community for us. It is called the church. This is to whom we are to have communion with. You might say, I don't enjoy the company of those people as much as my unbelieving friends. That may be so, but God is asking us to love each other and have fellowship in Him. Our own self pleasure is not supposed to be the most important thing. God will give us people that we enjoy and connect with. The people in church who are less popular or who take more effort to be friends with, don't they deserve love and fellowship too? Aren't they seeking the same things too? What God designed with the church is a group

of people striving for the same goals and purposes. This idea is so important that scripture even tells us to separate from people in the church that are walking unruly or in darkness. 2Thessalonians 3:6, "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us." Romans 16:17 "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them." Philippians 3:17-21, "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.<sup>18</sup> For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:<sup>19</sup> whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.<sup>20</sup> For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." Who we hang around with is important. The scriptures tell us God is working in us. We should not hinder his work. Time is too short. It can take a long time to change even with an honest heart. If we are in the right place at least the process can keep moving.

Having said all this we still might not see a big difference between light and darkness. Often when we judge a situation we compare people to ourselves. Some unbelievers are kinder than us and more patient than us. Some are more generous and honest. Don't judge only by individual traits. See the whole person. Many people are good in one area of their lives and horrible in another. Don't compare other people with yourself or yourself to others. Jesus Christ is the standard. Compare all things to Him and His righteousness. Are we going toward Him, standing still or going backwards? That is the question we should ask. We should judge ourselves as Paul states in 1Corinthians 11:31. Honesty is so important. Don't lie to yourself. Keep asking God to change you. Keep asking for the light to shine out the darkness. Psalm 139:23-24 "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;<sup>24</sup> And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting."

