

**“Life Shines in Darkness” Edited**

**Psalm 27:1**

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***“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1)***

Some days are dark and fear creeps up on us. On those days we think the dawn should be lighting up the sky, but the darkness remains. There are some days when we know the sun has risen above the horizon, but it is obscured by the thick and heavy clouds of looming storms. And those days sometimes feel like they just keep piling up. One coming right after another. Days are dark when our precious friends and supporters seem to be so far away or when we have just lost a loved one to a sustained sickness or a sudden tragedy. On dark days, we feel like the prisoners described in Psalm 107:10 who “... sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons.” On the darkest of days, we might even feel like we have been cast into the outer darkness described as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30). May God’s faithful Word shine through to us, reminding us of God’s character and love for us.

The Apostle John was well past his youth when he wrote the epistle of 1 John. In his letter, he speaks to his readers as a caring father wanting to bring hope to his dear little children. In the opening chapter, he writes, “And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:4-5). To show his love for the people to whom he writes, John speaks about the message he had heard concerning the Savior Jesus Christ. When John says “we” in verse four, he speaks of himself, along with the other human authors of Scripture, unveiling just a bit of the joy God delivered to them as they communicated God’s Word to others. The New Testament makes clear that the Apostle John was not unfamiliar with dark and difficult days, and neither was he naïve. John had seen, and been subjected to troubles because of his faith and the ministry of the Gospel. But through everything that he

experienced, the message of Jesus Christ and His work of redemption continued to shine forth.

Each of us endures trials and times of suffering in this world. You and I have heard, seen, and experienced in varying degrees and situations opposition to the Gospel in this day. We are faced with a consistent rejection of the truth about the significance of the lives of those yet in the womb or those dealing with various disabilities or declining health in later years. Denying God's Word concerning His hand in creation makes denying His concern and care for all people a simple matter for many. With an atmosphere of brokenness and anger looming all around us, we might think that we need to escape from reality or hide from the brightness of God's true light. The Word of God however, leads us in a different direction.

John's letter gives us a strong dose of reality. We sometimes try to avoid reality. We pretend things are not as bad as they look. We pretend that the consequences of our actions are not really going to affect us all that much. This is often the case with those who are encouraged to abort a child in the womb. The lie, often repeated, is that after this procedure or after taking these pills, you will be able to forget that any of this happened. But the hearts and minds of multitudes ache and break after they walk down the path of the false guides. We also sometimes pretend that it is easier to deal with someone who is angry at us than to apologize for the way that we have hurt them. We claim that our sins are warranted, or inevitable, and shrug our shoulders in resignation. However, we cannot and should not deny that in this world, we do deal with dark and evil days. We live in days of darkness brought about by the sins which have been committed by others against us as well as our own sins which have brought harm to others. In a sinful world, we hurt others and others hurt us.

However, John's letter starts with reality – a beautiful reality. Specifically, it starts with the reality of what John had seen and heard during the days of Christ's ministry. Jesus took on flesh and loved people through His perfect life and His innocent suffering and death. The message concerning the work and person of Christ is meant to bring joy to the sorrowing and light to those in the darkness. The light of God's mercy shines into the darkest of situations; the Holy Spirit guides people to confess their sins and brings forgiveness to those who have participated in abortions, or pointed people to end their own lives, or even suggested that someone be harmed in some other way.

Sometimes we have been silent because we are not confident about how to approach the situations we face. God's mercy extends to those who have been silent because of fear and doubt. We do not need to deny the reality of our sins; we can humbly confess all our sins to our compassionate Savior. With our confession comes the great and wondrous promise of the forgiveness of all our sins. Thank God that the light of God's Word exposes our sins and rebellion against God and He calls us to Himself. After all, Jesus is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2). John says in 1 John 1:4 that the writing and communication of the message of Jesus to others even brings about joy in his life. This is a reality that casts out fear and hopelessness.

John had an abundance of joyous events to consider, and his joy was multiplied as he wrote, telling all who read his epistle that God is light. And we rejoice to note, it is part of light's nature to shine forth. So, we exult in the reality not that God was light as if God's glory, power, or majesty are somehow diminished in the present. But God **is** light. Even when the present is surrounded by pain and suffering, God is not any less light. We should also rejoice as we hear "God is light." We are not told, "God will be light," as if there was something that God had yet to become. If God must become something beyond who He is now, we are lost and there can be no certainty of our forgiveness and salvation. God was light, is light, and always will be light so we can turn to Him for direction and for hope. The youngest of children know that a tiny light can bring confidence to step forward, even if they are blinking their eyes against the brightness of the light. Our Lord is more than just a tiny light.

Because God is light, His love and the life He gives continue to shine forth. His light is never extinguished. God is light and not darkness. Darkness is filled with the unknown, the difficult, and the dangerous. But this is not so with God. This does not mean that Christians do not run into the unknown, or travel the difficult path, and never encounter the dangerous. We know what it is like to be hesitant and questioning as we walk into the future. We have heard of those unsure of their ability to continue with the load they are bearing. "God is light" means that God's Word and activity are good, and He acts to care for us and protect us through those things. So, we can walk through this life in the light, even when an unexpected pregnancy is announced or a terminal diagnosis is revealed. Haven't we seen God faithfully care for us through many difficulties in our lives? Think of the story of your life and God's various activities to keep you safe and carry you to this day. He has been faithful.

God is good, and there is no sin in Him. His purposes what might sometimes be indistinguishable to our eyes, but which are discerned by faith in His promises. These are promises that fill our hearts with expectation like the words of prophecy in Isaiah 9:2 which says, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined." Isaiah's words describe the intercession, the incarnation of God, and this is what John had been a witness to as he witnessed the work of the crucified and risen Christ.

In this life, believers are brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ by His grace and mercy as they bask in the light of His grace and mercy. But all our expectations have not been realized. Remember that John says, "... in Him is no darkness at all." We often consider things along a spectrum. This was good, and this was less good, and this was bad. Or the paint color we are trying to select shifts from white to various shades of gray then to black. As believers, we know the light is there, but with our eyes we are not seeing the true brightness of the light. There are certain parts of the spectrum of light and darkness that we cannot see with our eyes now or fully comprehend, yet. So, we must focus again on faith. May we cling in faith to the truth of God's Word as expressed in our confession of the Nicene Creed that Jesus is "Light of Light."

As Christians, we rejoice in the Savior who shines light on our lives when we only expected inky blackness. May God's strong Word remind us that the fullness of life is meant to be lived in the light. In our weakness, may the Lord bring alongside us faithful brothers and sisters to proclaim that God is light and life to us and let us walk in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7). In Jesus we have light, and to have light is to have life. May we rejoice in proclaiming the message of Jesus as the Apostle John did. Thanks be to God that He is light, and He shines in the darkness.