

“Light and Darkness”
(Matthew 11:25-27)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, Shepard introduced us to six differences between those who are converted and those who are not.
 - a. The unconverted are full of six things: sin, darkness/ignorance, unbelief, Satan, self-centeredness, and the world.
 - b. The true believer, on the other hand, is just the opposite – he is full of humility, illumination, faith, the Spirit, God-centeredness, and glory.

2. We began by looking at the first difference:
 - a. How the unbeliever is not humbled by his sin and really can't be, because he loves his sin too much.
 - (i) It's not that he doesn't feel anything regarding his sin: his conscience is troubled, he does experience some sorrow for sin.
 - (ii) But it's all directed at what his sins cost him, not because his sins have offended God.

 - b. The believer, on the other hand, is humbled for his sins and that for the right reasons.
 - (i) The Spirit of God has changed his heart – he now loves what is right and holy.
 - (ii) And he hates sin – he sees it as the worst of all evils, because it is something God hates – and he is deeply humbled by it.
 - (iii) This is one of the ways we can know God's grace is at work in our hearts – if we have any love for what is holy, because it is holy, and any hatred of sin, because it is sin and offensive to God, then we can know that we are the Lord's.

B. Preview.

1. This evening, we move onto the next characteristic: the unbeliever walks in the darkness of ignorance, but the believer has “fullness of illumination” (*Parable*, 309).
 - a. The ignorance or illumination Shepard has in mind here is not merely regarding the facts of the Gospel, but the way those facts appear to us.
 - b. There is a reason why one shuns the Gospel and the other embraces it.
 - (i) The believer embraces the Gospel because it is lovely to him – this is the result of the illumination of the Spirit.
 - (a) The Spirit renews the believer's moral faculty, giving him a new heart, a new affection for moral uprightness or holiness.
 - (b) Once this happens, he sees the beauty of holiness as it is revealed in Christ and embraces Him as his greatest treasure.

(ii) The unbeliever shuns it, on the other hand, because he has no taste or desire for holiness. This is because of his moral depravity, which was the result of the Fall.

2. Tonight, we'll consider three things:

- a. First, that the unbeliever's mind is full of darkness, while the Christian's is full of light.
- b. Second, that there is a counterfeit knowledge/light unbelievers can have and how to distinguish this from the true knowledge.
- c. And finally, two additional ways the unbeliever can fall short of this true knowledge.

II. Sermon.

A. First, that the unbeliever's mind is full of darkness, while the Christian's is full of light.

1. Shepard tells us what the Bible clearly says, "All unregenerate men are under the power of darkness, of ignorance" (310).
 - a. Paul writes to the church at Ephesus, "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness" (4:17-19).
 - b. Unbelievers are "excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their hearts."
 - c. Ignorance can be of the facts of the Gospel – if they haven't heard it – but Shepard is speaking about more than this: this is a spiritual ignorance or blindness that comes from hardness of heart.
 - d. This is the result of the Fall – they have a moral faculty to know the difference between good and evil, but they are naturally attracted to evil and averse to good because they lost all love for good when they lost the Spirit.
2. On the other hand, the believer, Shepard remarks, has a "spirit of light, illumination or revelation, let into the mind, that only those who are loved by Christ have" (Ibid).
 - a. Peter writes, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God's* own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).
 - b. This light is a particular knowledge of God the saint has that even the greatest unregenerate scholars have never approached (310-311).
 - (i) Jesus told us about this knowledge in our passage and where it comes from, "At that time Jesus said, 'I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and

have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight” (Matt. 11:25-26).

- (ii) Jesus told His disciples that they were blessed, because though the Father had hidden these things from the other Jews as an act of judgment against them, He had opened their eyes to see them: “But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear” (Matt. 13:16).
- (iii) Unless the Father imparts this light, no one will come to Jesus because their hearts will not let them: Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught of God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me” (John 6:44-45; cf. 14:19-26).
- (iv) This is the light that sets the believer apart from the unbeliever.

B. Second, there is a counterfeit knowledge/light unbelievers can have that needs to be distinguished from the true knowledge.

1. Shepard tells us that hypocrites may know and believe that “Christ is the Saviour of the world, is come, is dead, is risen, is at God’s right hand, that in him God’s justice and mercy are reconciled, that there is mercy with him for the greatest of all sinners, etc” (311). But this can be the result of nothing more than competent human instruction – they had good teachers.
 - a. There were those acquainted with Christ, who saw Him while He was on earth, who ate and drank in His presence, who were taught by Him, and who even followed Him for a time. They learned a great deal about Him. But on the day of God’s judgment, Christ will tell these “evildoers” to depart (312).
 - b. Jesus tells us, “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’; and He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers’” (Luke 13:24-27).
 - c. Hypocrites may also learn a great deal about the Lord through His Creation and Providence, and through His Word. But this knowledge will always fall short of what the saints possess (312-313).
 - d. Unbelievers may have true knowledge about Christ, but still not really know Him.
2. How can we know whether we have the counterfeit or the reality?
 - a. Shepard writes, “The saving knowledge of Jesus Christ is this, whereby the soul, being sensible of his ignorance of Jesus, beholds such a glory of Christ’s person, as that he esteems him in all his glory, as his present, greatest, and only good” (313).
 - b. When a man sees Christ in this way for the first time, he realizes he has never really seen Him before.

- (i) Jesus tells us about those who see Him and about those who don't really see Him, in John 9:39-41. He said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind. Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, 'We are not blind too, are we?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, "We see," your sin remains.'"
- (ii) If the Pharisees would have admitted to their blindness, if they would have humbled themselves, they would have been saved. But since they did not truly repent – since they claimed to see, when clearly they didn't – they showed they hadn't and so were not forgiven.
- (iii) Those whose eyes are opened see their spiritual poverty and sin, see Christ as their greatest good, and so turn from their sins to Christ.
- (iv) Before the Lord had mercy on us and opened our eyes, Christ was no more precious to us than to the Jews who rejected Him (Ibid.), as Isaiah prophesied they would see Him, "He has no *stately* form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him" (Isa. 53:2-3).
- (iv) But the Lord having opened our eyes, now we see a glory in Christ we didn't see before; and not only in Christ, but in everything that has to do with Him:
 - (a) In His grace and truth: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).
 - (b) In the glory of His holiness: "But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:15-18; cf. Isa. 6:3).
 - (c) In His Law and ordinances: "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:9-10; 314).
 - (d) He becomes our greatest and only good (315).

C. Finally, Shepard gives us two additional ways the unbeliever can fall short of this true knowledge.

1. First, he writes, "Those that esteem Christ as men do merchandise; they would fain [be glad to] have it, but are loth [reluctant] to bring it. Men may esteem Christ, as they think, the only good; but herein their falseness appears, that they

neglect means to it, because they have some good else to quiet them. And here is condemned all lazy profession.”

- a. They want Christ at some level, but it’s the same kind of desire that men have for other things.
 - b. They would like to have Him and eternal life, because they don’t want to end up in hell, but they really don’t want Him on His terms – they don’t want to trust Him, repent of their sins, and push forward towards sanctification with the kind of obedience He requires.
 - c. If this is the price, they’ll settle for the world instead.
2. Second, he writes, “Those that would have Christ, and esteem him highly, and use means for him diligently, but they must have Christ, and world, and lust, and ease likewise. Christ to quiet their consciences, and the world their hearts; Christ to rest on when their duties fail them, and the world to rest in when the consolations of Christ are denied unto them.’
- a. They are divided: they have one foot in heaven and one in the world – Christ to take away their guilt and punishment and the world to satisfy their lusts.
 - b. But those who want Christ and the world really don’t want Christ at all. They want fire insurance, or to believe that they are saved from hell, only to enjoy the world more.
 - c. We can’t have Christ and the world (the evil things in this world) – we must let the world go entirely, or we won’t be saved.
 - d. Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 16:24-25).
3. And so examine your hearts this evening:
- a. Is it Christ you want or the world?
 - b. If it’s Christ, are you willing to let go of the world?
 - c. It’s only those who really see the beauty of Christ that are willing to take Him as their greatest treasure: and it’s only those who will see heaven. Amen.