



Walking in the Light

by Jim Wilson

One of my co-workers once spoke of the effect of light on different kinds of insects. Moths fly to the light, and cockroaches run from it. He was simply saying that light attracts and light repels. It is the same light in both cases.

The title of this paper comes from the seventh verse of the first chapter of John: “But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”

However, the definition of light is found two verses earlier. “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth” (1 John 1:5-6).

God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. Some of us have been in places where there is no light at all. Even for those who are not afraid of the dark, after a short while they begin to get scared.

However, none of us has ever been in a place where there is no darkness at all. We like to be in places that are a mixture of sunshine and shadows, light and darkness. God uses these expressions to tell us spiritual truth. For instance, “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing” (Phil. 2:14-16).

If you have been on a U.S. Navy ship at sea or if you have been in a teacher’s room at an elementary school, or in any office, or in any manufacturing plant or in any home or church or anywhere where there are two or more people, you have almost certainly heard and/or participated in complaining.

Complaining seems to be a social norm rather than a phenomenon. “In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron” (Exodus 16:2).

One of the most common complaints is, “That’s not fair.” This is a thought that supposedly appeals to the highest standards of virtue or morality, i.e. fairness. This may be a shock to you, but fairness is not a quality of God, nor is it from God. It is not like the fruit of the Spirit, nor is it justice or mercy. It is humanism. When we use the phrase “that’s not fair,” we are saying that everything is not equal, but it should be equal. The person who says, “That’s not fair, has suddenly set themselves up as the judge of right and wrong. He has also become the judge of everyone else—God, father, mother, boss, roommate, and anyone else who doled out this “unfairness.”

As an exercise in studying Jesus’ view of fairness, please read the following:

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius[a] for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

“‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Did you identify with the complainers, or did you identify with Jesus? If you start with fairness as the standard, there will be many things that you will not like about God.

Some years ago, a man was executed in the state of Washington. There were two groups of protestors outside the location of the execution. One group was very much against capital punishment. The other group was, at least in this case, very much for the death sentence.

Before the man was executed, he was shown on television. He said that he had received Jesus Christ in prison and that he had been forgiven by God and was going to heaven. This made the people who were for his execution very angry. They did not want him to go to heaven. The other group also was not happy because he died physically. To them, life on earth was more important than everlasting life. Neither group thought it was fair. But God's view of justice and mercy is never the same as fairness.

There is a solution for complaining about fairness.

“Do everything without complaining or arguing.” (Phil. 2:14)

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Col. 3:17)

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” (Col. 3:23)

“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thess. 5:18)

The solutions are simple:

- 1) do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
- 2) to the Lord Jesus, and
- 3) give thanks in everything. It is difficult to complain when you are doing these things.

However, you may find this difficult to practice, even if you realize the truth of it and the need for it. If you are coming out of years of complaining about everything, then giving thanks in everything is a big turn-around.

Before you can start giving thanks, you need to repent of your years of complaining. Confess and forsake the complaining. Otherwise, you will be trying to obey on top of a pile of unforgiven disobedience. That just will not work.

Once you are clean, then you can give thanks and do it in the name of the Lord Jesus.

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