

# The Light of Grace and Truth

Extracts from notes on John 1.

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There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe" (John 1: 6, 7). A Divine Person, eternal in His being, separate in His personality, God in His essence, the Creator of all things great and small — mind and matter, and force — has been down in this world, in our form of manhood. He became flesh, bringing every Divine excellency into His humanity, untainted by our evil, moving in the orbit of God's will, the contrast to, the antithesis of, wilful man, unique in holiness, full of grace and truth. In Him was **life**, really and truly **life**, lived according to God. Purity and good were there in unlimited perfection, light and love, which in a man are seen in the form of truth and grace. And this life was the light of men. Whatever benefits accrue to the rest of creation (and all creation will be affected by it), it was intended to be light to men. The true light coming into the world is light shining for every man.

The life He lived, as well as the message He brought, was for man's good; just as the rays of the sun are for all nations and tongues, for men of every colour. Apart from the sun what should we be? Owing to its service we have light, and warmth, and life; apart from it would be darkness and death. Yet herein is a marvellous thing; **natural** light dispels darkness; **this** light — the life of Jesus — shone in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. The state of man was darkness, and remained so though the light shone. There were no eyes to take in the impression; the sunshine showed **them** up, but being blind, **they** saw not its light or brightness; it was lost upon them. The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came to His own, and His own received Him not. Israel with its peculiar privileges was as irresponsive as the world at large.

There was a man sent from God, his name John, to bear witness of the light. What an extraordinary mission! As though when men rose in the morning, and were surrounded by the charm of the day, it were necessary to take a message to every one to assure him that light had come. **It is necessary for the blind.** Does not the very mission of John demonstrate to us that, in God's account, men are blind, without the capacity for understanding Christ? Yet such was God's mercy to men that He sent this messenger to point Him out, that all men might believe through him. John's message, where received, prepared individuals at least to receive this Divine Saviour. How important then to repent that we may believe the Gospel.

So further we read, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1: 12).

A narrow gate, and a narrow way, lead to life. The reception of one Person leads to the blest relationship of sons unto God. Who would have thought that such hopeless conditions as men presented in this world could have been met by so simple a solution? Who would have supposed that such a solution to men's needs should be attended by so stupendous an issue? A blind man does not **per**-ceive, but he can **re**-ceive. We don't all have the chance of receiving money, and garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants and maidservants (see 2 Kings 5: 26). But to each hearer of the good news of the Saviour, Son of God, comes the opportunity of receiving Christ. The world knew Him not in His lowliness, His own people of Israel received Him not; but some submitted to Him, opened their hearts to Him, welcomed Him within by placing their faith in His name; and so

proved themselves to be born of God.

God uses illustrations of men receiving Him. At least four of the senses are employed to represent this. We **look** to Him and are saved. We **hear** His voice and live. We **touch** the hem of His garment, and are made whole. We **taste** that the Lord is gracious. To receive Him is to trust Him, it is to believe in His Name. It may be compared to eating and drinking, in which we appropriate a commodity outside of ourselves, take it within, and so assimilate it that it becomes life to us.

We hear of Christ the Son, His incarnation, His holy life, His goodness, His death as a sacrifice for sin, His resurrection and ascension, and we appropriate this as of eternal concern to ourselves. Not content to say, "He died for all," our deep need constrains us to cry "It was for me." It is no longer an external history merely; it is a vital fact to my own soul that He has told out God's love to me, and His death is God's intervention on my behalf for my blessing. This makes Christ a personal Saviour to me, and a precious Saviour; while at the same time it has secured for me the privilege of Sonship; the blessedness of knowing that God is my Father, and that I am His child.

And thus all has reached us in Christ, since, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14).

The Word "became" flesh; grace and truth "became" by Jesus Christ. The language used is the same both in verse 14 and verse 17. When God was pleased to express Himself fully in relation to man, and in a Man, the One by whom He did so was seen to be full of grace and truth. In the proclamation of the Lord in Exodus 34: 6, 7, graciousness and truth are seen to be among His attributes; but though He showed great favour to Moses, as in Ex. 33, yet out of consistency with His truth it was necessary to forbid his entrance into Canaan, (Numbers 20: 10-13).

Grace is God's gracious manner even with a creature that is fallen. Truth represents things as they are. Truth tells me what God is, what I am, what sin is. To us it would seem impossible to maintain at its full height all that God is in absolute holiness, to expose all that the sinner is in sin, and yet show grace. The two things are seen together in Jesus Christ. Even in His life and service both were expressed.

Never was a person so accessible, such a Minister of good, and at the same time so holy, so absolutely apart from sin. Even to His enemies He could say, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" While almost in the same breath saying to the convicted sinner, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more" (John 8: 11, 46). Notwithstanding all the emptiness of the religion of the Jews as represented by the Pharisees in Matthew 15, He maintained right relations between the Jew and the Gentile, as seen in the case of the Syro-Phoenician woman; yet met her need fully and richly in grace. She bowed to the truth and secured the grace (verse 27).

Nothing cuts so deeply as the truth; nothing heals so thoroughly as grace. What a comfort it is that we can go to God and welcome all the searching light of His presence, all its exposure of us down to the bottom of our nature, and over all the story of our sin and wretchedness, assured that He only probes for our own good, that the resources of His grace may be brought out in all their comprehensive fulness. Light and warmth reach us from one Sun in the heavens; grace and truth subsist by Jesus Christ. They shine if we may so say in one Face, it is the One who has come from the purity of God's heaven that is the Healer of man's disease. It is the Hand that was once pierced for our sin that now removes its guilt and defilement from us, it is the heart that bled for our transgressions that interprets to us the heart of God.

