**Lesson 8**

**The Spirit Enlightening**

By nature fallen man is in a state of darkness with respect to God. Be he ever so wise, learned, and skillful in natural things, when it comes to spiritual things, he is blind. It is not until we are renewed in the spirit of our minds by the Holy Spirit can we see things in God’s light. But this is something that the world cannot endure to hear, and when it is insisted upon, they will hotly deny it.

There is a twofold spiritual darkness in men, outward and inward.

* **Outward darkness**— those who are without the gospel until God sends the external means of grace to them.

***Matthew 4:16— The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light.***

* **Inward darkness—** those who are without the Holy Spirit. This is the case with all men until God the Spirit performs a miracle of grace within the soul and quickens the dead into newness of life:

***John 1:5— And the Light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.***

**Regarding inward darkness**

Arthur Pink makes a distinction between **spiritual ignorance** and **spiritual darkness**.

* **Ignorance** is a **passive** thing, but spiritual **darkness** is an **active** thing—an energetic principle and **active opposition** to God.
* The **darkness** that rests upon the human soul gives the heart a bias toward evil, prejudicing it against holiness, fettering the will so that it never moves Godwards. Hence, we read of ***the power of darkness (Col. 1:13)***; so great is its power that all under it ***love the darkness rather than the light*** ***(John 3:19)***.
* No matter how well we are acquainted with the letter of Scripture, no matter how sound and faithful is the preaching we sit under and the books we read, until the soul is divinely quickened it has no ability to discern spiritual things.

***1 Corinthians 2:14— But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.***

* Inward spiritual darkness is worse than spiritual ignorance because it is an active opposition to God. All men are born in ignorance to the things of God. But once a person has been taught about God and refuses to believe, he has passed from passive ignorance to active refusal and his second state is much worse than the first. It would be better for the unbeliever to have never heard the gospel than to have heard and refused it.
* Inward darkness not only fills the soul of the natural man, but “is something far more dreadful than a mere intellectual ignorance of spiritual things.”

**Enlightenment Presupposes Turning from Self**

**Joseph Bellamy** (1719-1790; New England pastor; student of Jonathan Edwards)— It is true that many a carnal man is delighted to think that God loves him and will save him. But in this case, it is not the true character of God which charms his heart. It is not Godwho is loved. Strictly speaking, the natural man can only love himself, and self-love is thus the source and motive of all his affections.”

“The mere fact that your heart is thrilled with a belief that God loves you is no proof whatsoever that God’s true character would suit your taste, had you right notions of it.

* **There is no spiritual love for the true God until self be hated.** The one necessarily implies the other. I cannot look upon God as a lovely Being without looking upon myself as infinitely vile and hateful.

**Question:** Why are there many professing believers who are thrilled with a belief that “God loves you” and yet do not hate their own sin?

The main reason many professing believers do not hate themselves and the sin within them is because they have been given a false gospel that God accepts them “just as I am.” A great many people who believe they have heard the gospel have only heard the “good news,” but have never heard the “bad news.” And without having an understanding and belief that they are vile and sinful in the sight of God, the “good news” is just a feel-good message that “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” There is no repentance because they see no need for repentance.

**Question:**  Why is it necessary that we hate ourselves? What does it mean if a professing believer refuses to see him or herself as vile and odious to God?

**It is only when the Holy Spirit gives us the ability** **to see ourselves as God sees us** . . . vile and loathsome creatures . . . that we have a true understanding and appreciation for the magnitude of God’s gift to us.

**The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to see that there is nothing loving or lovely in any of us**, and this knowledge makes His grace abundantly more gracious to us. It is easy to love someone who is loving and lovely. It is very difficult to love someone who is vile and evil. A person who does not see himself as God sees him does not understand the whole gospel.

**Enlightenment follows quickening**

Pink uses the illustration of Genesis 1:2-3 as a picture of natural man’s spiritual condition and the process of salvation— ***2 . . . darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light" and there was light.*** Using the example of Genesis 1, Pink then states that “this is of what spiritual illumination consists. It is not a mere informing of the mind, or communication of intellectual knowledge, but an experimental and efficacious consciousness of the reality and nature of divine and spiritual things. It is capacitating the mind to see sin in its real hideousness and heinousness, and to perceive ***the beauty of holiness (Psa 96:9)*** so as to fall heartily in love with it.”

**Question:** Based upon this statement by Arthur Pink, why must quickening precede enlightenment?

The beauty of God and His Light cannot be perceived until man has the capacity to perceive it. And spiritually dead men have no capacity to perceive the light of God without first being regenerated. It is only when the Spirit of God has moved in a dead soul that a person can then perceive God’s light.

This answers the question, “why did this person not respond to my presentation of the gospel?” The response to your presentation of the gospel is not dependent upon the eloquence of your presentation but solely upon the Spirit of God quickening that person so that they can see the light.

“Spiritual light is something which the natural heart cannot even conceive of, but the knowledge of which is communicated by the Spirit’s enlightenment (1 Cor. 2:9-10). A dead man can neither see nor hear. This statement is true of both naturally and spiritually. There must be lifebefore there can be perception. The Spirit must quicken the soul before it is capable of discerning and being affected by divine things in a spiritual way. We say “in a *spiritual* way,” because even a blind man may obtain an accurate idea of objects that his eye has never beheld; even so the unregenerate may acquire a natural knowledge of divine things. But there is a far greater difference between an unregenerate man’s knowledge of divine things and the knowledge possessed by the regenerate, no matter how orthodox and Scriptural the unregenerate man’s views may be.”

Pink states . . .

* “The Spirit’s quickening of the dead soul into newness of life lays the foundation for all His consequent operations. **Once the soul is made the recipient of spiritual life, all its faculties are capacitated unto spiritual exercises**: the understanding to perceive spiritually, the conscience to feel spiritually, the affections to move spiritually, and the will to act spiritually.”
* “Once the Spirit has brought one of God’s dead elect onto resurrection ground, He proceeds to illumine him. The light of God now shines upon him, and the previously-blind soul, having been divinely empowered to see, is able to receivethat light.”
* “When Christ said to the Pharisees, ***you serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?*** (Mat 23:33), those words determined His character in their eyes. And it implies a contradiction to suppose that Christ’s character might appear lovely to them, without their own appearing odious, answerable to the import of His words. There was nothing in a Pharisee’s heart to look upon his own character in such a detestable light, and therefore all the Savior’s words and works could only exasperate them. The more they knew of Christ, the more they hated Him; as it was natural to approve of their own character, so it was natural to condemn His.
  + The Pharisees were completely under the power of “darkness,” and so is every human being till the Spirit quickens him into newness of life.

**Question:** If these statements are true, what does this say about the Arminian view that man cooperates with God in salvation and chooses to be saved?

When presented, from Scripture, with the truth of man’s condition before the Spirit of God begins working, it is clear and unambiguous that man can do nothing to comprehend the light of God without the Spirit of God quickening him. Just as a dead man in a casket cannot perceive or respond to the call of men to see and rise, so the dead human soul is incapable of responding to the light of God’s word without the quickening of the Spirit of God.

**Manifestations of enlightenment**

Arthur Pink gives a list of **things the enlightened soul is able to perceive and desire** **after the work of quickening by the Holy Spirit:**

1. The quickened soul is enabled to perceive the true nature of sin as opposition against God, expressed in self pleasing.

2. By it the enlightened soul discerns the plague of his own heart and sees and agrees that he is a moral leper, totally depraved, corrupt at the very center of his being.

3. By it the enlightened soul is able to detect the deceptions of Satan, which formerly made him believe that bitter was sweet, and sweet bitter.

4. By it the enlightened soul apprehends the claims of God: that He (God) is absolutely worthy of and infinitely entitled to be loved with all his heart, soul, and strength.

5. By it the enlightened soul learns God’s way of salvation: that the path of practical holiness is the only one that leads to heaven.

6. By it the enlightened soul beholds the perfect suitability and sufficiency of Christ: that He is the only One Who could meet all God’s claims upon him.

7. By it the enlightened soul feels his own impotence unto all that is good, and presents himself as an empty vessel to be filled out of Christ’s fullness.

8. The enlightened soul now perceives that those things in which he once found pleasure are loathsome and damnable.

9. The enlightened soul’s former concepts of the world and its enjoyments are now seen to be erroneous and ensnaring, and he apprehends that no real happiness or contentment is to be found in any of them.

10. That holiness of heart and strictness of life which before he criticized as needless preciseness or puritanical extreme, is now looked upon not only as absolutely necessary, but as most beautiful and blessed.

11. Those moral and religious performances he once prided himself in and which he supposed merited the approval of God, he now regards as filthy rags.

12. Those whom the enlightened soul once envied, he now pities.

13. The company he once delighted in now sickens and saddens him. His whole outlook is completely changed!

**Three Characteristics of Divine Enlightenment**

**1.** Divine enlightenment gives **certainty**to the soul.

* When we are saved we immediately become a target of Satan. And at times our spiritual attacks can be so powerful that we act in ungodly ways. But we live with the knowledge that God is more powerful than the adversary and that not one of His children will be lost.
* Satan may be permitted to inject unbelieving and atheistic thoughts into his mind, but it is utterly impossible for him to persuade any quickened and enlightened soul that God has no existence, that Christ is a myth, that the Scriptures are a human invention. God in Christ has become a living reality to him.

**2.** Divine enlightenment is **transforming***.*

* Divine enlightenment changes you. You don’t just learn about God, you are transformed by the knowledge.
* Divine enlightenment differs radically from a natural knowledge of divine things, such as the unregenerate may acquire intellectually, but which produces no real and lasting impression upon the soul.
* “A spiritual apprehension of divine things is an efficacious one, stamping the image thereof upon the heart and molding it into their likeness. Thus this spiritual illumination is vastly different from a mere notional and inoperative knowledge of divine things.”

**3.** Divine enlightenment is a spiritual **preservative***.*

* In 1 John 2:18-20 the apostle gives a warning regarding those “antichrists” who would seek to seduce many from the faith . . .

***1 John 2:18-20— 18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.***

* + In this passage reference is made to those who had fallen under the spell of these deceivers and, as a result, had apostatized from Christianity. In sharp contrast to them the Apostle affirms, ***but you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know (v. 20)***.
* Here was the divine preservative: the Spirit’s enlightenment ensures the true children of God from being captured by Satan’s emissaries.
* **Apostates are those who had never been anointed by the Spirit**; renewed souls are, and this safeguards them. The voice of a stranger ***they will not follow*** (John 10:5). **It is impossible to fatally “deceive” one of God’s elect** (Mat 24:24).

**But what about Hebrews 6:4-6?**

* It teaches of ***those who have once been enlightened***. How do we reconcile this?

***Hebrews 6:4-6— 4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.***

At the core of the interpretation of Hebrews 6 is how one interprets the words “enlightened,” “tasted,” and “partakers.” Do these words shed light on whether a person is regenerate or unregenerate?

* The word ***enlightened*** is the Greek word *phōtizō*, meaning “to be mentally aware of something, to be instructed.”
* Those who have once been ***enlightened*** are not spoken of as born again, made holy, or made righteousness. None of the normal New Testament terminology for salvation is used. In fact, no term used here is ever used elsewhere in the New Testament for salvation, and none should be taken to refer to it in this passage.
* The Greek word for “***enlightenment***” here signifies “to give light or knowledge by teaching.” Thus, “enlightened” here means to be instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, so as to have a clear apprehension of it.
* The light of the gospel has broken in upon these people’s darkness, and life can never be the same again; to give up the gospel would be to sin against the light, the one sin which by its very nature is incurable. (F.F. Bruce)
* The word ***taste*** is used metaphorically. We taste things, and then either receive or refuse them, as we find occasion. They may taste of the word in its truth, not in its power; also of the outward order of gospel worship, not its inward beauty; also of the gifts of the Church, not its graces.
* The word ***partakers*** is the Greek word *metochos*, meaning “to share in, participant.” This is not the same word (*koinōnos*) that is used in Colossians and 2 Peter, in which we read of the promises of God to those who are qualified to “***be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light***” (Col 1:12 KJV) and “***partakers of the divine nature***” (2 Pet 1:4 NASB).

In Hebrews 6:4-6 it appears that the people spoken of have received knowledge, but not a saving knowledge. They have received faith, but not saving faith. And, as such, their "enlightenment" is not unto salvation.

* In the parable of the soils (Matt. 13:3-9), these are the seeds that fell onto the rocky places and thorns. Similar to Hebrews 6:4-6, they were enlightened, but not unto salvation.