

## COMMENTARY ON JOHN

### LESSON NUMBER 35

*John 3:20* ***“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. <sup>21</sup> But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”*** ..... John 3:20-21)

#### **HE THAT DOETH EVIL, AND HE THAT DOETH TRUTH**

### INTRODUCTION

Only the Lord can speak with certitude concerning *“every one,” “he that,” “whosoever,” “all that,” “any man,” “that man,” “every man,”* etc. Such expressions include every person falling under the description given, and exclude every one else. As a sample, in the Gospels, the expressions *“every one”* is mentioned twenty-four times, *“he that”* one hundred and sixty-three times, *“whosoever”* eighty-two times, *“all that were”* four times, *“all that are”* two times, *“any man”* forty-three times, *“that man”* nine times, and *“every man”* fifteen times. **Jesus did not speak in generalities**, always speaking with the panorama of truth before Him. None of His words were guesses, or estimations, or according to appearance. If Jesus said it, it is to be taken as absolute truth, perfectly depicting the way things really are, and what determinations have already been made. We *“try the spirits”* ( John 4:1), but never the Lord Jesus, or and any word delivered through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is the peculiar prerogative of faith to lean upon the words of Jesus, and live in reliance upon their truth. If they appear to contradict what is seen, then what is seen is NOT true – as when Eve *“saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise . . .”* (Gen 3:6). The result of that misjudgment perfectly depict the consistent result of proceeding in life as though what Jesus said was not the absolute truth. Now, in this text, Jesus is speaking about things related to ultimate Divine acceptance or rejection. This is not in the class of dietary rules that were given under the Law of Moses. They are not words that can be glossed, and treated as though they were irrelevant. I do not believe we can emphasize this too much, particularly when we live in a society that borders on being libertine, where people can give themselves to debauchery and disgraceful actions simply because they want to. In the midst of such a society, Jesus arrests our attention with words of finality and unwavering accuracy. He is not simply stating a theological dogma, but principles by which God Almighty will judge the people. God is greatly to be praised that we have been given such words.

#### **EVERYONE THAT DOETH EVIL**

*John 3:20* ***“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”***

**FOR.** One other versions read, “And indeed.” <sup>NJB</sup> The other versions omit this word.

The word is, however, in all of the Greek texts I have (gar), and proves to be a significant word. Lexically defined it means, "A CONJUNCTION, WHICH ACCORDING TO ITS COMPOSITION, AND (EQUIVALENT TO), IS PROPERLY A PARTICLE OF AFFIRMATION AND CONCLUSION, DENOTING TRULY THEREFORE, VERILY AS THE CASE STANDS." <sup>THAYER</sup> In other words, this is an explanation of the previous statement. It is the cause of the effect, "men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). The truth of the matter is that there is an underlying cause for every deed men commit, whether it is good or evil. If we fail to see these causes, we will not be able to explain the deeds, and will therefore tend to be neutral toward them.

**EVERY ONE.** Other versions read, "all," <sup>NRSV</sup> "everybody," <sup>NJB</sup> "For every," <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> "anyone," <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> "People who," <sup>CEV</sup> "Those who," <sup>GNB</sup> and "people who." <sup>GWN</sup> There are no exceptions to this rule. In my judgment, words should not be used that allow men to make independent judgments. Rather than referring to a mere class of people, the Lord narrows it down to the individual level— "every one." Therefore, we are not speaking of a theological position or creed, but to things individuals choose to do.

**THAT DOETH EVIL.** Other versions read, "practicing evil," <sup>NKJV</sup> "who do evil," <sup>NRSV</sup> "whose acts are evil," <sup>BBE</sup> "do wicked things" <sup>CEB</sup> "practices wicked things" <sup>CSB</sup> "doeth ill" <sup>ERV</sup> "do what is wrong," <sup>GWN</sup> "doeth abominable things," <sup>MRD</sup> "does evil deeds," <sup>NET</sup> "does wrong," <sup>NJB</sup> "is doing wicked things," <sup>YLT</sup> "every wrong doer," <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> "in the habit of doing wrong," <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> "heedlessly acting," <sup>ABP</sup> "makes a practice of doing evil." <sup>MESSAGE</sup>

What is Jesus saying? Is He saying that only those who continually do what is wicked refuse to come to the light? Or is he saying that in order to do any evil at any time, the light has to be ignored? If it is the former, then why were Adam and Eve judged after sinning one time (Gen 3:16-24). Or Moses who struck the rock instead of speaking to it (Num 20:11-12). And what of David, who sinned with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:14)? What about Uzzah, who touched the ark of the covenant (2 Sam 5:6-7)? Or Ananias and Sapphira who were judged for committing a single sin (Acts 5:1-10). Were these people practicing sin, as some have represented the text? Or was it that they had committed a particular sin? Can a man really sin while he is standing in the light? Is there no warning prior to committing a sin that allows one to escape from it (1 Cor 10:13). I am persuaded that Jesus is introducing the enslaving nature of sin as well as its penalty. I fear that men are too prone to speak accommodatingly of sin, as though there were times when it can be safely committed.

**HATETH THE LIGHT.** Other versions read, "detests," <sup>ABP</sup> and "loathes, detests." <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> All other versions I have read "hates," or "hate." While the word "hate" carries the idea of detesting, it also includes "THE SIGNIFICATION TO LOVE LESS, TO POSTPONE IN LOVE OR ESTEEM, TO SLIGHT, THROUGH OVERSIGHT OF THE CIRCUMSTANCE, AND FEEL AND EXPRESS NOTHING MORE THAN INTEREST IN, OR DISREGARD AND INDIFFERENCE TO A THING." <sup>THAYER</sup> The latter meaning is a kind of exposition of "detest." It involves confronting two things that are opposite to one another: light and darkness. One promotes righteousness, and the other promotes evil. One emits from Christ, the other from the devil. In this case, a person cannot sin while He is facing the light and continuing to gaze at it. He has to turn from it in order to sin – even a single time.

**NEITHER COMETH TO THE LIGHT.** Jesus takes the matter even further, explaining why the sinner did not "come to the light." It is because he knew what would happen. He knew the light would expose the deed for what it was, and thus prohibit him from doing it. The deeds would be "reproved" whether they were about to be committed, or had been committed. **Sin, whether continuance in it, or committing it a single time, is never preceded by coming to the light.** There is never, in such case, a quest to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:15-16). The accompanying route of escape

that is joined to every temptation is never sought out. When a person has sinned, we know this was the case, for if it was not, then God is unfaithful, and Jesus is not an effective Intercessor.

**LEST HIS DEEDS SHOULD BE REPROVED.** Other versions read, *"be exposed,"* <sup>KJV</sup> *"his acts will be seen,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"shown as they are,"* <sup>DARBY</sup> *"[so] that his works may not be detected,"* <sup>YLT</sup> *"would be exposed and they would be punished,"* <sup>LIVING</sup> *"exposed and condemned."* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

**The postulate is that if sin can be seen for what it really is, men will not commit it.** This is something that all humanly conceived programs ignore. They assume that sin can only be avoided by discipline. And, indeed, outward discipline can cause a person to refrain from expressing sin, although there is no guarantee that it will. However just as surely as men will come to Christ when they see who He really is, so they will flee from sin when they see what it is while in the light.

### **HE THAT DOETH TRUTH**

*"<sup>21A</sup> . . . But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest . . ."*

**BUT.** This comes from a word [de] that means, "BY WAY OF OPPOSITION AND DISTINCTION; IT IS ADDED TO STATEMENTS OPPOSED TO A PRECEDING STATEMENT," <sup>THAYER</sup> "TO DENOTE CONTINUATION AND FURTHER THOUGHT DEVELOPMENT, TAKING ITS SPECIFIC SENSE FROM THE CONTEXT AND CONTRAST." <sup>FRIBERG</sup> **We are being exposed to spiritual reasoning,** a manner in which the Spirit fixes the truth more firmly in our minds. We recall more easily those things that are comprehended, and build upon what has been discerned. There is a marked difference and stark contrast between believers and unbelievers. In this text, Jesus points out the conduct of each. The one who does **not** believe does evil. But what of the one who **does** believe?

**HE THAT DOETH TRUTH.** Other versions read, *"does the truth,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"practices the truth,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"lives by the truth,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"do what is true,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"whose life is true,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"does what is true,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"doeth right,"* <sup>MRD</sup> *"doing right,"* <sup>LIVING</sup> *"does what is honest and right,"* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *"does what is honest and right,"* <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> *"observing the truth,"* <sup>ABP</sup> *"is living the truth,"* <sup>GOODSPEED</sup> *"working and living in truth,"* <sup>MESSAGE</sup> *and "practices truth [who does what is right]."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Those who *"do the truth"* are ultimately the ones who are *"of the truth,"* and will hear the voice of Jesus (John 18:37). These are the people Jesus eventually shepherds (Heb 13:20), and whom He will teach (Eph 4:20-21; 1 John 5:20). This is the kind of person Nathaniel was. Jesus described him as one *"in whom is no guile"* (John 1:47). He had not yet believed on Christ, though he did not hesitate to stand in His presence, where he detected who Jesus was. David also spoke of the man *"in whose spirit there is no guile"* (Psa 32:2). In an even more advanced way, Paul spoke in this manner of himself doing the truth: *"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and **godly sincerity**, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward"* (2 Cor 1:12). Prior to that time he described himself as living *"in all good conscience before God"* (Acts 23:1). Before Cornelius believed on Christ, he was described as *"A **devout man**, and one that **feared God** with all his house, which **gave much alms** to the people, and **prayed to God alway**"* (Acts 10:2).

A person who does the truth is not living to impress people. Such do not misrepresent themselves. Mind you, this is not enough to justify a person, but it is enough

to move them to expose themselves to the truth.

The tendency of religious men is to philosophize about the truth. There have been non-Christian people who called for the truth to be preached to them. For example, Sergius Paulus, a deputy on the Isle of Paphos, was *"a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the Word of God"* (Acts 13:7). The Philippian jailor, when confronting a midnight earthquake, *"called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:29-30). These are examples of men who were doing the truth in the sense of being sincere, and earnestly wanting to do what was right.

Men who tend to argue religion often ask, "What do you believe?" That may not always be the proper question to ask. In the case of our text, it would be more appropriate to ask, "What do you do?" "How do you live?" "What are you devoted to doing?"

**COMETH TO THE LIGHT.** Other versions read, *"comes into the light,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"comes out into the light,"* <sup>NJB</sup> *"come gladly to the Light,"* <sup>LIVING</sup> *"comes toward the light,"* <sup>IE</sup> and *"will come to the light."* <sup>CEV</sup>

When light is beamed into the area in which these are located, they go to it, not out of mere curiosity, but because they anticipate receiving something they need. This was the ultimate reason the people gathered on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:6), and in the Temple court following the healing of the lame man (Acts 3:11). It is why the people in Samaria and the Ethiopian eunuch listened to Philip (Acts 8:12,31).

**THAT.** Other versions read, *"so that."* <sup>NIV</sup> *"in order that."* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> There is a reason why those who do the truth come into the light. It is not because they are merely curious, or to be entertained. They seek confirmation of the rightness of the way they are living.

**HIS DEEDS MAY BE MANIFEST.** Other versions read, *"so that his deeds may be clearly seen,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"that his works may be made manifest,"* <sup>ASV</sup> *"so that it can be seen,"* <sup>CEB</sup> *"so that all may see"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"so that it may be plainly evident,"* <sup>NET</sup> and *"so others can see."* <sup>NLT</sup> The reason for the one who does the truth coming to the light is **not** that others will see that he is doing the truth (as the New Living Translation says). That is a foolish view! The purpose is that the individual himself might be assured he is living rightly. Even as those on the day of Pentecost *"gladly received the Word, and were baptized"* (Acts 3:40), like Apollos when he heard about the baptism into Christ (Acts 18:26), and like the disciples in Ephesus, when they found out they were not properly baptized, they gladly submitted to being baptized into Christ (Acts 19:5). And yet, there is even more to this.

### **A CIRCUMSTANCE THAT IS WROUGHT BY GOD**

<sup>21B</sup> . . . *that they are wrought in God.* Other versions read, *"have been done in God,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"having been wrought in God,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"have been done through God,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"have been done by the help of God,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"are accomplished through God,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"carried out in God,"* <sup>ESV</sup> *"they are doing what God wants,"* <sup>NLT</sup> *"because he did them for God,"* <sup>IE</sup> *"performed with God's help,"* <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> *"God is really the one doing what they do,"* <sup>CEV</sup> *"his actions have God's approval,"* <sup>ISV</sup> and *"wrought with God [Divinely prompted, done with God's help, in dependence upon Him]."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Solomon spoke of this when he wrote, *"The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD"* (Prov 16:1). Again, *"Man's goings are of the LORD"* (Prov 20:24).

When those who do truth come into the light, it is made known to them that *"it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Phil 2:13). Such

men come into the light in the same way that Simeon went up to the Temple to dedicate the Holy Child: *"And he **came by the Spirit** into the temple: and when the parents brought in the Child Jesus (Luke 2:27). God did the same kind of thing when He *"stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God"* (Hag 1:14).*

**LIFE IN CHRIST, AND UNDER THE NEW COVENANT.** Considering that Jesus' words were prophetic, referring to the nature of life in Him, they perfectly comport with true spirituality. Those who have *"a good conscience, and are willing to live honestly"* (Heb 13:18), will not draw back from exposure to the light, or to Jesus Christ, in particular. They will not object to the probing of the Word of God which discerns *"the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Heb 4:12). In fact, they come to the Light like David did, who lived under the Law, prior to Christ and the New Covenant: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (Psa 139:23-24). Believers are aggressive to know whether or not they are living in a manner that pleases the Lord. They take seriously admonitions like, *"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God"* (Col 1:10).

In Christ Jesus, those who do truth are described in this manner, *"For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth"* (3 John 1:3). That is, they take *"the truth"* as it *"is in Jesus"* (Eph 4:21), and *"mix"* it with faith (Heb 4:2), which enables it to be translated into living – living in which both the dying and the living of Jesus are beheld in our bodies, or *"mortal flesh."* As it is written, *"Always bearing about in the body **the dying of the Lord Jesus**, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that **the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh**"* (2 Cor 4:10-11).

John spoke of the truth made known in our text when he wrote to Gaius: *"Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. **He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God**"* (3 John 1:11). This kind of life is facilitated by not only coming to the light, but **walking** in it. *"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7). This is *"the light of life,"* to which Jesus referred in John 8:12. It is the kind of life in which a person does not *"stumble."* As Jesus said, *"If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the Light of this world"* (John 11:9). Those who do what Jesus says in our text are appropriately called, *"children of light"* (Eph 5:8).

Having our deeds made known, that they are done in truth, is not something mystical. It is not a mere feeling. This is *"the full assurance of faith"* (Heb 10:22), when the Lord confirms to our hearts that what is being done in us, is being done by Him. This assurance will never be given to a person who is not doing the truth – living it out. It will be confirmed by a *"good conscience"* (1 Tim 1:19; 1 Pet 3:16), and the *"rest"* of faith (Heb 4:3).

Part of confirming the souls of the disciples (Acts 14:22; 15:41), is assuring them that their deeds have been wrought in God. *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Phil 2:13). Behold how Paul wrote to the young Thessalonian church: *"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because **God hath** from the beginning chosen you to salvation through*

*sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess 2:13). To the fledgling Galatians he wrote, "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God" (Gal 4:9). Even though the Galatians had lost their way, if they would come to the light, it would display their ignorance, and enable them to be pleasing to the Lord. However, they must come to the light to gain this perspective. God does not intend for people to have a sense of Divine acceptance while they are living in contradiction of the truth. He simply will not allow it.*