

Light in Darkness

by Thomas Watson

God causes light to arise in darkness for the upright, bringing comfort and joy, and fulfilling His promises.

Scripture: Psalm 32:2

Topics: "Gods Promises", "Spiritual Joy"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the comforting light that arises in darkness for the upright, emphasizing that God's promises bring joy and relief even in the midst of trouble and affliction. He describes the characteristics of the upright as those who act with grace, compassion, and righteousness, guided by faith, the Word of God, and the glory of God. Watson explains that God causes light to shine in the darkness of His people's lives, both outwardly through prosperity and inwardly through grace and spiritual joy.

Transcript

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"Unto the upright there arises light in darkness." Psalm 112:4

Chrysostom calls the Scriptures a spiritual paradise. The Book of Psalms is placed in the midst of this paradise. David's Psalms are not only for delight, but for benefit. They are like those trees of the sanctuary in Ezekiel, which were both for food and for medicine. The Psalms are commensurate and exactly fitted to every Christian's condition. If his affections are frozen--here he may fetch fire; if he is weak in grace--here he may fetch armor; if he is ready to faint--here he may fetch cordials.

Among other divine consolations, this text is none of the least, "Unto the upright there arises light in darkness." These words are calculated for the comfort of God's Church in all ages. This text is like Israel's pillar of fire, which gave light in the wilderness. Or it is like the mariner's lantern, to give light in a dark night.

"To the upright there arises light in darkness." Give me permission to explain the words, then I shall come to the proposition.

"To the upright." Who are meant here, by the upright? The Hebrew word for upright, signifies plainness of heart. The upright man is without deception or fraud. He is one in whose spirit there is no deceit, Psalm 32:2. He who is upright, his heart and his tongue go together, as a well-made dial goes exactly by the sun. The words following here in the text, may serve for a short paraphrase to show us who this upright man is. He is gracious, full of compassion, and righteous.

1. The upright man is gracious--that implies his holiness.
 2. The upright man is full of compassion--that implies his charitableness.
 3. The upright man is righteous--that implies his justness.
1. The upright man is gracious--therefore he fears God.
 2. The upright man is full of compassion--therefore he feeds the poor.
 3. The upright man is righteous--therefore he does to others as he would have them do to him.
1. The upright man is one who acts from a right principle--and that is faith.
 2. The upright man is one who acts by a right rule--and that's the Word of God.
 3. The upright man is one who acts to a right end--and that's the glory of God.

This is the sincere and upright man.

The second thing in the text is, "There arises light to the upright man." By light is here meant, metaphorically, comfort or joy. Esther 8:16, "The Jews had light, gladness, and joy." By light is meant gladness. The light, when it springs, very much relieves. Joy is to the heart as light is to the eye--very exhilarating and refreshing.

Third, "light arises in darkness." By darkness is meant trouble, anything that disquiets either the body or the mind. Trouble is darkness. Isaiah 8:22, "Look unto the earth and behold trouble and darkness." Psalm 107:10, "Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death." As darkness is very disconsolate and frightening, so where trouble comes it makes everything look like the terrors of the night.

The observation is this:

DOCTRINE. When the condition of God's people is darkness, God causes a light to shine unto them. "To the upright there arises light in darkness."

Here are two branches of the proposition. First, the upright, such whom God loves, have their night. Second, a morning light arises to them in the midst of all their darkness.

1. First, the upright, such whom God loves, have their night. It may be a very dark season. Godliness does not exempt them from suffering. They may have a night of affliction; a cloud may set upon their names and estates. God may send trouble upon all their outward comforts, Ruth 1:20.

Moreover, the people of God may have a night of desertion. God may withdraw the smiling beams of His favor, and then it is night with them indeed. Job 6:4, "For the Almighty has struck me down with his arrows. He has sent his poisoned arrows deep within my spirit!" It alludes, said Grotius, to the Persians who, in

their war, dip their arrows in poison to make their wounds more deadly. Thus God sometimes shoots the poisonous arrows of desertion at the godly. Then they are in the dark. They are benighted. Though God has the heart of a Father--yet sometimes He has the look of an enemy. He may cause darkness in the soul, and shut up the beams of spiritual comfort.

He does this, that He may the more quicken the exercise of grace, for prayer may sometimes act highest in the hour of desertion. Jonah 2:4, "I said I was cast out of Your sight; yet will I look towards Your holy temple." Faith and patience, like two stars, shine most bright in the night of desertion. We prefer our comforts--but God prefers the actings of our graces.

The Lord may cause a dark cloud to be upon the righteous, a cloud of desertion--that He may hereby awaken and stir up in His people a spirit of prayer that they may now cry mightily to God, that they may stir up themselves to take hold of God by prayer. Sometimes a father hides his face to make the child cry after him more. Just so, God may hide His face in a cloud of desertion, that His children may cry the more after Him, "Oh, hide not Your face from me!" Psalm 140:7. Desertion will make one pray, if anything will. Desertion is a short hell. Jonah called the whale's belly, the belly of hell, because he was deserted there. And if ever he was going to pray, it was now, that he might get out of that hell. Jonah 2:2, "Out of the belly of hell, I cried unto You, and You heard my voice."

That's the first point, the godly may have their night.

2. The second part of the proposition is this--A morning light arises in the righteous in all their darkness.

"To the upright there arises light in the darkness." Psalm 18:28, "The Lord will light my candle." As if David had said, "My comforts at present seem to be blown out, and I am in the dark. But the Lord will light my candle and cause light to arise."

There is a twofold light that God causes to arise in His people in the dark--an outward light and an inward light.

An OUTWARD light shines; that is, God oftentimes causes the light of prosperity to arise upon His people, which is a light in darkness. When God causes peace and prosperity in the tabernacle of the righteous, here is light rising in darkness. Job 29:3, "When His candle shines upon my head." The candle is the candle of prosperity, a lamp of outward blessings. God has suddenly altered the scene of providence; all of a sudden He has turned the shadows of death into the light of morning.

When God's people are in the dark, God sometimes causes an INWARD light to arise in them.

First, the light of grace; He makes that shine. In the midst of darkness, a spark of faith in the soul is a spark of light. When the tree has no blossoms or leaves to be seen, as in winter, there may yet be sap in the root of the vine.

So, my brethren, when our outward comforts are dead, as it were, it is winter; yet there may be the seed of God in the heart. And this spark of grace is a dawning light to the soul.

Second, God sometimes causes a light of spiritual joy and consolation to arise in the dark and disconsolate soul. And truly this light of spiritual joy is the very glimmering of the light of heaven. Isaiah 12:1, "Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me." This light of spiritual comfort is sweet and ravishing. It as far exceeds all other joys as heaven excels earth. Thus you see in the midst of darkness or

black clouds--that God makes light to arise and shine unto the godly.

It is only God Himself who can make it lightsome when the soul is in a dark, disconsolate condition. When the sun sets, none can make it rise but God. Just so, when it is sunset in the soul and the dew of tears drops--none can make daylight in that soul but God Himself. Others may preach comfort to us--but it is God who must make us feel comfort. Others may bring a cordial to us, and set it before us--but it is God who must pour in this cordial, and make it effectual. Psalm 4:7, "You, Lord, have put gladness in my heart."

Question. Why does God make light and joy to arise to the upright in their darkness?

Answer. For three reasons:

1. That He may fulfill His promises. He has said that He will give light to His people when they are in darkness. Isaiah 42:16, "I will make darkness light before them." God's honor lies upon it to make good His promise. He causes light to spring up in the disconsolate soul. God's promise is His bond. When a man has given his bond, he cannot well go back. God's promises may be long in travail--yet at last they bring forth. There are two things in God that never fail.

First, His compassions fail not, Lamentations 3:22.

Second, His faithfulness fails not, Psalm 89:33. God may sometimes delay a promise--but He will never deny His promise. God may sometimes change His promise, or He may turn a temporal promise into a spiritual promise--but He will never break His promise. He has said He will cause light to go before His people in all their darkness.

2. God will cause light to arise in His people in all their darkness, because they help to enlighten others, and therefore they shall not lack light. When others are in the dark of ignorance--they enlighten them with knowledge. When others are in the dark of affliction--they relieve them. They are merciful to them in giving them alms, which administer light and joy to their hearts. The saints of God are lights to those who sit in darkness. When they are benighted with any sorrow, they shall not lack comfort. The Lord causes light to arise to them in darkness.

3. God will cause light to arise in His people in darkness; either He will support them in trouble--or deliver them out of trouble. He will cause light to arise because He sees His people have need, great need of some dawnings of light. They would faint away and be discouraged, if there was nothing but darkness and no glimmering of light.

Should the sick patient always have purging medicine and no cordials given him, he would faint away. God knows our frame, and He sees our spirits would fail before Him--if He always allowed a cloud to lie upon us. Therefore, in judgment He remembers mercy. He causes the daystar of comfort to arise upon His people. God will not let it be always be midnight--lest we touch upon the rock of despair. The musician will not stretch the strings of his violin too far--lest they break asunder. Thus you see why the wise God sees it best to cause light to arise in the midst of darkness.

So much for the doctrinal part.

Use 1. Of INFERENCE.

INFERENCE 1. See the infinite goodness of God towards His people in all cases that fall out in this world, whether affliction or desertion. Oh, the goodness of God! The Lord checkers His work. He mixes in some stars to give light--as the artist mixes bright colors with dark shadows. The condition of God's people on earth is never so dark but they may see a rainbow in the cloud of providence. Take one Scripture to verify this. Psalm 138:7, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me." Every step I take I tread upon thorns; I walk in the midst of trouble.

Joseph was in prison, and there was darkness; but the text says, "The Lord was with Joseph," Genesis 39:21. There light arose.

Jacob had the hollow of his thigh put out of joint--there was darkness; but at that very time he saw God's face, a glimmering of God, and the Lord blessed him--there was light rising in darkness, Genesis 32:25.

Job lost all he ever had and was struck with boils and sores; here was a dark providence. Yes--but hereby Job's grace was perfected and improved, and God gave him an honorable testimony that he was upright, and gave him double estate to what he had before--here was light arisen to Job in the clouds of darkness, Job 42:10.

Thus God mixes light with His people's darkness. In the ark there was manna laid up with the rod. So it is in God's providence towards His people. With the rod of affliction there is some manna, some light, some comfort that God causes to spring up. Manna with the rod, oh, the goodness of God! In the darkest night He keeps alive some spark of light among His people. That's the first inference.

INFERENCE 2. If it is God's work to cause light and comfort to the righteous, why then, how contrary do they act, who make it their work to cause darkness and sorrow to the righteous! God's work is to cause light to spring up in the godly. Their work is to cause darkness. You know there is a woe that belongs to them who make the heart of the righteous sad. God is creating light for His people, and His enemies are laying snares for them. God is pouring wine and oil into His people's wounds, and His adversaries are pouring vinegar into those wounds.

How contrary do these act! Those who are of the Romish whore are this day plotting the ruin of God's people, and would have the Church of God lie in a field of blood. The Lord makes light to arise to the godly. The wicked labor to make darkness and sorrow to arise for them. But such as lay snares for the righteous will find God raining fire upon them, Psalm 11:6. Upon the wicked God shall rain fire and brimstone. The wicked strike at Christ through His members' sides; but let them know that if they kick against Christ the Rock, the Lord will be too hard for them at last. God ordains His arrows against the persecutors, Psalm 7:13, and God never misses His mark! If He has His arrow upon the string, He will certainly shoot; and He never misses His mark. That's a second inference.

INFERENCE 3. See here the difference between the wicked and the godly. In all their darkness, the godly have some light; some comfort arises to them. In all their comforts, the wicked have some darkness rising up to them. Conscience chides them and troubles threaten them. It is like the handwriting upon the wall. God shall wound the heads of His enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goes on still in his trespasses. The sinner, in his light-hearted condition, in all his outward mirth, may see some clouds of darkness. God's threatening arrows are against him and God's curse is against him; and God's curse blasts wherever it comes. An impenitent sinner lives every day under the sentence of death, and there remains for him, said the Apostle, God's fiery indignation! Hebrews 10:27.

When the hardened sinner dies he will be in a bad case; he drops into the grave and hell both at once! God has brewed a deadly cup for the impenitent sinner. Observe Psalm 75:8, "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, the wine is red, it is full of mixture, and the dregs thereof, the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." This red wine is the wrath of God, and this wine is full of mixture. What's that? That's the worm of conscience, and the fire of hell. Here is a mixed cup, and the wicked shall ever be drinking this cup. God will never say, "Let this cup pass away." No, they must be forever drinking the dregs of the cup of wrath! I think this Scripture should put a damp on all their joy and mirth. Darkness is coming upon them, 1 Samuel 28:19. It was sad news to Saul that the devil brought, "Tomorrow you shall be with me." Dreadful news! Now men are sporting with their lusts and pleasures; now they think they are in their gallantry--but tomorrow they may be with the devil!

INFERENCE 4. Does God cause light to spring up in His people's darkness? Then see here the difference between earth and heaven. Here in this world there is a mixture of darkness with the saints' light; in heaven there shall be nothing but pure light, no darkness there. It is called an inheritance of light, Colossians 1:12. As the philosophers say, light is the very glory of the creation. It is the beauty of the world. What was all the world without light but a dark prison? Here's the beauty of heaven, it is a place of light. There is no eclipse or dark shadow to be seen there. Heaven is a bright body all over embroidered with light. There is the Sun of righteousness shining with the bright orient beams of glory, Revelation 21:23. The Lamb is the light thereof. Oh, how should we long for that place of paradise!

Use 2. Of CONSOLATION. This consolation is for the Church and people of God.

This text is a pillar of light, a breast of consolation. "To the upright arises light in darkness." Does God make light, joy, and peace to arise to the righteous? Why, then, should we despair? Why should we despond when it is God's great design to lighten His people's darkness? I confess things have a bad aspect. England is like the ship in the gospel, almost covered with waves. This may humble us and set our eyes abroad with tears--yet let us not mourn as without hope.

First, this text, I think, lets in some branches of light. It gives some spark of comfort in our darkness. Let me come as the dove with an olive branch of peace. That is some spark of light that there are many upright ones in the land. And the text says, "Light arises to the upright." Indeed, were the godly quite removed, as it is the desire of some to destroy them, God would soon make quick work with the nation. He would soon break up house here. Genesis 19:22, "Hasten! Escape--for I cannot do anything until you leave." God will do much for the sake of the upright of whom my text speaks. The upright are the excellent of the earth; they are the chariots and horsemen of Israel. They are the very flower and cream of the creation; they are the glory of Christ, 2 Corinthians 8:23. And for their sakes God may yet cause light to arise, and His arm may bring salvation.

Second, another spark of light in our darkness that God is pleased to stir up in His people is a spirit of mighty prayer. They cry mightily. Certainly God will not say to this city and nation, "Seek My face in vain." Prayer is the wall and bulwark of the land. It is observable that when the Lord intends to pour out the vials of His indignation, He stops the sluices of prayer; He shuts up the spirit of prayer. Jeremiah 7:16, "Therefore, do not pray for this people, neither lift up a cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me, for I will not hear." God has not yet said this to us.

The key of prayer, oiled with tears and turned with the hand of faith, unlocks God's heart. Prayer, when it is importunate, staves off wrath from the nation, Exodus 32:10. God said to Moses, "Now therefore let Me

alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them." And what did Moses do? He only prayed. Fervent prayer overcomes the Almighty. Prayer finds God free--but it leaves Him bound. It is as it was. His hand staves off judgment. This lets in some dawning to this land, that God doesn't wholly leave us, especially remembering that Christ Jesus, praying over our prayers again, presents them to His Father and perfumes them with His sweet fragrance, which makes them go up as incense, Revelation 8:3.

Third, another spark arising is when we consider God's compassion and mercy. Mercy is God's darling attribute, which He loves most of all to magnify, Micah 7:18. Mercy pleases Him. Justice is God's strange work, as if He was not used to it; but mercy is His proper work. It is as natural for Him to show mercy as for the bee to give honey. Why may not mercy give the casting voice for this nation? As that Scripture says, "In His love and in His pity He redeemed them," Isaiah 63:9. Love and pity will do great things.

God's mercy is not only free, sending out pardons where He pleases--but, which is more, God's mercy can as well heal as it can save. It is a healing mercy. Hosea 14:4, "I will heal their backslidings." Observe, God's mercy can reclaim the persecutor; it can soften the impenitent; it can bring back some who are gone astray. Mercy can destroy the sins of the nation and yet save the nation. It is a healing mercy. "I will heal their backslidings." These are the sparks that God causes to arise.

OBJECTION. But things still look and seem as if they are in the dark. We would have more light. What must we do? How must behave, until God makes light to arise to us in darkness?

Answer 1. Let us, in all dark providences, go into our chambers. Isaiah 26:20, "Come my people, enter into your chamber, and hide yourself." Enter into your chamber, that is, we must go and search our hearts by serious meditation. Go into this chamber of your hearts. Let us, in the first place, search our evidences for heaven, bring our graces to the touchstone. Let us see what faith we have, and what love for God we have.

Does conscience witness that we not only serve God, but love Him? Can we cry out for God, for the living God? Are we carried up to heaven in a fiery chariot of love? Is it thus with us? Oh, let us search into the chambers of our hearts and see how all things stand between God and our souls!

My brethren, when things are dark without, we need to have all clear within.

Let us go not only into the chamber of our hearts--but let us go into the chamber of divine promises, and there let us rest a while. Oh, these sweet promises of God which our souls may take comfort in! God has promised comfort to all His mourners. God has promised that He will strengthen the infirmed, Isaiah 40:29. God has promised a crown of glory, Revelation 2:10. He has said that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Let us now, by faith, hide ourselves in these chambers. That's the first thing we are to do.

Answer 2. Having done this, let us, under all clouds of darkness--commit ourselves to God so that He would safeguard and keep us. This I ground upon that Scripture in Psalm 37:5, "Commit your way unto the Lord." In the Hebrew it is "roll your way upon the Lord." Commit yourself and your cause to God by prayer. As an orphan commits himself under care of his guardian, so should we give all our care to God. "Commit your way unto the Lord." Let us do our duty and trust God with our safety. It is our work to cast care; it is God's work to take care.

Answer 3. Having gone into these chambers, the chambers of our hearts and the chambers of divine promises, now, in the third place, let us now wait for God's time until He shall make light to arise in our

horizon, until God turns our darkness into the light of the morning. God can suddenly disperse the black clouds. God can create light; God can strike a straight stroke by a crooked stick; God can remove the mountains that lie in our way until light arises.

Let us patiently wait; light will spring up. The blessings that we expect are worth waiting for. To see the golden fleet of prayer come laden home with rich returns of mercy, to see peace and truth united, to see popery and profaneness abominated, to see the beauty of holiness shining forth, to see Christ ride in triumph in the chariot of His gospel, to see the righteous honored and renowned and be like the wings of a dove covered with yellow gold--these certainly are mercies worth waiting for. Therefore, let us wait patiently.

And to encourage holy waiting, I will shut up all with that Scripture, Isaiah 30:18, "And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you; and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all they that wait for Him."

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