

# Walking in the Light

1 John 1:5-7

## INTRODUCTION

During the great American influenza epidemic of 1918, churches and all public gathering places were ordered closed. Yet more than ever, it was then that people needed hope and consolation. Burdened by his inability to reach out to people in their time of need, one resourceful pastor thought of the magnificent stained glass windows that graced his church. Those windows faced a major thoroughfare and were large and commanding in design. He had numerous floodlights placed inside the church; illumination through the glass to the outside world gave passers-by the full effect of the windows' story. There for all to see were the matchless portrayals of Jesus: Jesus the good shepherd bearing a lamb on his bosom; Jesus the searching Savior rescuing the lone lost sheep while the ninety-nine rested safely on the fold; Jesus praying in Gethsemane; Jesus on the cross; Jesus triumphant in Resurrection glory. The silent sermons of light and stained glass spoke an eloquent message.

As we begin this second message from the biblical letter of 1 John, we learn that **"God is light,"** and our calling as believers is to **"walk in the light as He is in the light"** (v.7).

In the first four verses of First John, we saw John declare the reality of **"Word of life"**, the **"eternal life"** that was with the Father and has been manifested in to us. And that life is Jesus Christ. We learned that we are invited to **"fellowship"** with God and with other believers. The basis for our fellowship is our relationship with Jesus Christ. We said that fellowship is sharing a common life together—and that life is Jesus. When we have that fellowship with God and each other through Jesus, it brings us fullness of joy.

So to have fullness of joy we must experience the kind of life that comes from having fellowship with God! The question for today is: What does fellowship with God look like, so that we may have the life that produces fullness of joy?

In the next few verses (1Jn 1:5-2:2), John discusses the nature of fellowship with God. And he describes the problem that hinders fellowship, sin.

Remember that we said last week that one of the reasons John wrote this letter was to refute the false teachers who were trying to deceive Christians. As we look at 1 John 1:5 through 1 John 2:2, there John answers three false claims of these false teachers. You can easily recognize these three false claims because they all three begin with the words, **"If we say that"**(NKJV) or **"If we claim"** (NIV).

Let's look at them really quickly as we start today:

1. **"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."** (1 John 1:5). It seems these false teachers were saying that they had fellowship with God, but they were living unholy, sinful lives. They thought that it didn't matter how they lived if they claimed to have Jesus. They were basically hypocrites, lying to others about their relationship to God.

2. **"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."** (1 John 1:8). They were also claiming that they no longer had a sinful nature. They were lying to themselves about their sinfulness.

3. **"If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."** (1 John 1:10). Third, they were claiming that they no longer sinned. They were lying to God to try to justify their own sin.

We are only going to have time to deal with the first of these three false statements today. We will look at the other two next week.

## **I. THE NATURE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD (5)**

What does fellowship with God look like? Well, the nature of fellowship with God is tied to the nature of God Himself. If we are going to claim to have fellowship with God, that fellowship has to be in harmony with the nature of God, who God is. And so John starts verse 5 by saying, **"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."**

### **A. God's Nature: He is Light (v.5).**

#### **1. Jesus' Life was a Message, a promise.**

John tells us that **"this is the message we heard from Him."**

"Message" is the Greek word *epaggelia* which means an announcement. Used 53 times in the Bible, 52 times it is translated as *promise*, only here is it translated as *message*. Most often, it is used to describe God's promises to us concerning the Messiah, Jesus. And what is this message, this promise from God? **"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."** That's what Jesus came to tell us.

As far as we know, this is not a direct quote from Jesus. You won't find those exact words in the gospel accounts of Jesus' life. But it is a synopsis of Jesus' teachings concerning the nature of God. It is very similar to what John says in the beginning of his gospel, John.1:4-5, **"In Him (that is, in Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of men and the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (or overcome it)."**

Jesus declared this message about Himself in Jn.8:12, **"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."** And in John 12:46 he says, **"I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness."**

**Light and Darkness have specific meanings in the Bible.** The contrast of **"light"** and **"darkness"** runs throughout both the Old and New Testaments. It is a familiar metaphor. In the Bible, **"light"** and **"darkness"** are used in at least two ways:

#### **1. First, light represents PURITY and darkness represents EVIL.**

In an interview, best-selling author of fictional tales of horror, Stephen King was asked about his daily writing routine. He said that he only writes in the morning. When asked whether he ever wrote at night, he replied, **"Write at night? Are**

**you kidding? Not with the stuff I write."** Even Stephen King knows the power of darkness.

God is called "**light**" but Satan is referred to as "**the power of darkness**" or the prince of darkness (Lk.22:53). Jesus said in John.3:19, "**And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.**" Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light**" (Eph.5:8).

In the Old Testament, Isaiah 5:20, we read, "**Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!**" You see how light is a picture of good and darkness is a picture of evil.

When John says that "**God is light**," he means God is good. He is pure, righteous and holy. He is in no way evil, depraved or sinful. With Him there are no shadows. He is not "shady."

## **2. Second, light represents TRUTH and darkness represents IGNORANCE or FALSEHOOD.**

God's word acts like a light, showing us God's truth. For example, Psalm 119:105 says, "**Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.**". Proverbs 6:23 says, "**For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light.**" 2 Peter.1:19 refers to "**the prophetic word**" as a "**light that shines in a dark place.**"

So putting these two things together, LIGHT represents that which is pure and true, DARKNESS represents that which is evil and false. The nature of light is to shine, to drive out the darkness. When John says "**God is light**," he means that God is good, pure, and true--in Him is no "**darkness**," no evil or error.

Think about what light does. Look at how light shows us the nature of God.

### **1. Light REVEALS.**

Light illumines. To "shed light" on a subject is to share precise knowledge. To "bring something to light" is to learn more about it, to have clear knowledge.

A man and his wife are awakened at 3 o'clock in the morning by a loud pounding on their door. The man gets up and goes to the door where a drunken stranger in the pouring rain is asking for a push.

"Not a chance" says the husband - "It's three o'clock in the morning!" He slams the door and returns to bed.

"Who was it?" asks his wife.

"Just a drunken stranger asking for a push" he answers.

"Did you help him?" She asks.

"No, I didn't-it's three in the morning and it's raining out."

"Well, you've got a short memory" says his wife. "Can't you remember about three months ago when we broke down on vacation and those two guys helped us? I think you should help him."

The man does as he is told and gets dressed and goes out into the pouring rain and calls out into the dark. "Hello-are you still there?"

"Yes," comes the answer.

"Do you still want a push?" calls out the husband.

"Yes, please!" comes the reply from the dark.

"Where are you, I can't see you?" asks the husband.

"I'm over here.....on the swing"

Light can be very helpful at times....We could say it this way, "**Light reveals, darkness conceals.**" God's nature is light. God reveals. He reveals the truth about Himself and about us. God reveals Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the "**Light of the World.**"

God reveals our sin and imperfections. That's why Jn.3:19 says, "**...men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.**"

God reveals our need for Him. He reveals the truth of salvation.

## **2. Light BRINGS LIFE.**

All of us who have studied biology know that light is essential for life. In photosynthesis light takes elements in the air and in the plants and turns them into energy and growth. Plants will not live without light. Throughout the Bible, light often represents life.

In his gospel John speaks about Jesus' incarnation, His coming to earth as a man. And he shows that Jesus is God who brings light and life (John 1:4-9)

4 In Him was life, and the life was the **light** of men.

5 And the **light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the **Light**, that all through him might believe.

8 He was not that **Light**, but was sent to bear witness of that **Light**.

9 That was the true **Light** which gives **light** to every man coming into the world.

Have you ever noticed how some people are born again and begin a radical transformation of their lives? It seems that over a short period of time their lives become entirely different. What happens? God gives them light and life. He energizes them. As they walk in His light, they grow and bear fruit.

You might say, "*Yes, pastor, I've seen that in a few people, but I know many people who claim to be Christians who are not like that. They are harsh, angry, bitter, untrustworthy, conceited, etc... Why hasn't God energized them?*"

I'm glad you asked. There are some people who have been saved, but instead of walking in the radiant energy of God's light, they stumble in the darkness.

In verse 6 we come to the first false claim.

## **B. False Claim #1: "WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM", YET WALK IN DARKNESS (6-7)**

Why is this claim false? Because fellowship means to have something in common, to share life together. And we have seen that God is "light" (goodness, righteousness, holiness and truth).

To "**walk in darkness**," therefore, would be going against who God is! When we "**walk in darkness**" we "**lie and do not practice the truth**." We are living a lie. Who are we lying to? Who is deceived? Not God, He knows all. We try to deceive others, we are hypocrites. We claim to have this fellowship, this common life, with God but we show by the way we live that we do not. To "**walk in darkness**" means to turn off God's light, to live as if there is no God. We refuse to come into the light of His truth.

An angry church member once went up to her pastor. And asked him "Why do you keep on preaching to us Christians about sin. After all, sin in the life of a Christian is different from sin in the life of an unsaved person

The pastor replied, "Yes you are correct, sin in Christian is different. It is much worse."

How many of us have sin in our lives that would just kill us if anyone found out about? Yet we continue to come to church every week pretending that everything between us and God is just fine, thank you.

We want our brothers and sisters to think we are spiritual, so we lie about our lives and try to make a favorable impression on others. We want them to think that we are walking in the light. But you know, we are not fooling God. And most of the time we are not fooling others either, only ourselves.

The Bible does not deal in shades of gray. "**God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.**" God always calls darkness just what it is, sin. Sin is missing the mark, falling short of the glory of God, rebelling against the God who loves you. Sin is walking in darkness. And what happens when we walk in darkness? We often get hurt, and hurt others.

Have you ever found yourself walking around in the dark? A few nights ago I found myself in that exact position. I was up getting a glass of water in the middle of the night. I didn't turn the lights on because I didn't want to disturb anyone. So, still half asleep, I made my way from the bedroom to the kitchen. Somewhere between the kitchen and the bedroom I ran into a chair with my toe.

I must admit that this was not the most pleasant experience or one of my more graceful moments. I firmly believe that the whole incident was caused by walking in the dark. Things would have gone a lot differently if I had been walking to the kitchen with the lights on. Life is so much easier when we walk in the light.

## **C. True Living: Walking in the Light (v.7).**

Walking in the Light builds Fellowship with God. When we "**walk in the light as He is in the light**" we are "**in the light**" with Him. We have fellowship with God.

Preacher HARRY IRONSIDE said this verse gave him some confusion. In his mind it meant 'to walk *according to* the light'. And so he wore himself out trying to be good, to obey every command. Finally he realized it says, 'to walk *in* the light'. "In the light" is *where* we walk and not just *how* we walk. It means to daily walk in the presence of God and allow His word to shine on us and His power to energize us and give us life.

How do you practically do this on a daily basis? Be in God's Word. Remember His word is to be a "**lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.**" As you get into God's Word and read it and study it and memorize it and meditate on it— God's light shines on your life. His Spirit of light shines inside of you.

Walking in the Light builds Fellowship with other Believers. John also says "**we have fellowship with one another.**" A lack of fellowship with other believers is based on a lack of fellowship with God (cf. 1 Jn.3:14). When the light shines on us, it reflects on others too!

John says "**and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**" I want you to notice what this suggests. "Walking in the light" does not imply sinlessness. It doesn't mean that I am perfect and that I never sin. It means I am letting God shine into all the dark places so that He can deal with my sin. When we "**walk in the light**" we stop deceiving ourselves. We stop posturing and pretending. We honestly bring our sins into the light and admit them to God. Our sins are made evident by the light and we deal with them.

The good news is that when we do that, when we walk in the light, we experience forgiveness and cleansing. "**the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**"

When people of John's time heard the word light they sat up and took notice. These people did not have electricity. The night-time was very dark. Oil lamps provided only a dim light. When we hear light our reaction is to be the same; we sit up and take notice. None of us want to be in the dark.

Jesus' blood overcomes all darkness of sin. Believers walk in the light of forgiveness. "**For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins**" (COLOSSIANS 1:13,14).

Light and darkness are incompatible. Sin and the child of God are incompatible. They may occasionally meet; they cannot live together in harmony. -John R. W. Stott