

1 John 1:5-10

God is Light

The apostle John began his letter by declaring that the goal of the Christian message is fellowship. He wrote in verse 3,

that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

To be in fellowship with God and Christ is to be in partnership with them, to have companionship with them and to share in God's nature and everlasting life. In fellowship with God, His Spirit within us produces the fruit of the Spirit giving us love, Joy and peace. The Spirit enables us to have longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.¹ Being in fellowship with God our character should become more and more like His. If we are truly in fellowship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, how we think, feel and live should reflect that reality. This is the main theme of 1 John 1:5-10.

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.
(1 John 1:5)

Right at the start John begins by telling us what God is like. And he brings us face to face, not with God's love, but with God's holiness. You would think that after telling us that we may have fellowship with God, John would say, "Having fellowship with God you must know that God is love." But, no, John very bluntly says "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."

In Scripture the words light and darkness are very common. Light refers to that which is absolutely holy, pure and true. God's Word is true. Psalm 119:105 reads,

Your word *is* a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.

And darkness refers to error, falsehood and evil. In John 3:19 Jesus said,

¹ Galatians 5:22, 23

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.

So, John begins with this truth, “God is light” absolute holiness “and in Him is no darkness at all.” And here is why he begins this way; before we think about the love of God or the mercy of God or His tender kindness, we must come to grips with the fact that God is absolutely holy. Unless we understand the holiness of God we will be wrong about the love of God. We will have a soft, sentimental idea of God as love. We will not understand that our “God is a consuming fire”² and hates sin. And we will have a false idea of what it means to have fellowship with God.

The false teachers said that you could sin in the flesh and still have fellowship with God in your spirit. John warns that these false teachers are wrong. Peter wrote, “but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct.”³

If we don't begin with the fact that God is holy and that on our own we are not, we'll never understand God's plan of salvation through Christ's death on the cross. If God is only love, then the death of Christ for our sins is unnecessary and meaningless. But Scripture says, “Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”⁴

It's easy to have a false sense of peace if you have a “user-friendly” God. If God is just a God of love you can say you have peace with God without ever really dealing with your sin. But that false peace with God will not stand on the Day of Judgment. True peace and true joy comes from being redeemed and saved from our sins by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, who by his sacrifice reconciles us to God.⁵

We can have fellowship with God only because Christ's death on the cross paid for our sins. And now, to have daily companionship with God we must strive to live life according to God's will found in His written Word.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.
(1 John 1:6)

² Hebrews 12:29

³ 1 Peter 1:15

⁴ 1 Peter 3:18

⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:20, 21

John is rather blunt here, don't you think? What he wrote about is hypocrisy. We cannot truly have fellowship with God if our lives are characterized by unrighteousness. To walk in darkness means to live a life of habitual sin. It doesn't have to be gross sin like murder or stealing. It can be unkind words, selfishness, being uncaring. It could be the worst sin of all, which is to live life as if there is no God.

Most people don't realize at all, that they are living in darkness. But when you walk in darkness your thoughts and desires are fashioned by the desires and logic of a fallen world. And the world's values, ideals, what it loves and fears and desires are all manipulated by Satan.

And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.
(Ephesians 2:1, 2)

Once we lived our lives according to the values and standards of a world that is separated from God and in spiritual darkness. But then, by the grace of God, through faith, the Bible reveals that “[God] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”⁶ And more than merely being rescued from darkness, God has changed who we are.

For you were once darkness, but now *you are light* in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*.
(Ephesians 5:8-11)

Fellowship with God means that we see all of life the way He sees it. We have the same desires He has and the same disdain for darkness. If we are controlled by the desires of the world rather than by desire for the things of God, it doesn't matter if we simply say we have fellowship with God—we don't. Let's read verse 6 again.

⁶ Colossians 1:13

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

Christianity is more than a belief system that we mentally assent to. A Christian is someone who strives to live according to God's revealed will. You know, I said that most people don't realize at all that they are living in darkness. Yet the way they think and live is contrary to the things of God.

For example, I heard someone say, "I only regret doing good to people who don't deserve it." Think about that statement, "I only regret doing good to people who don't deserve it." But now, think about what Jesus said,

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.
(Matthew 5:43-45)

Or this from Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

That's quite a different value than doing good only to those who deserve it, isn't it? Now, back to 1 John.

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.
(1 John 1:7)

A genuine Christian endeavors to live a lifestyle of holiness; being different from the world. Walking in the light points to a pattern of living in the will of God. And when we do we have genuine fellowship with God, Jesus Christ and with other believers. The way to preserve the precious treasure of deep unity with God and other believers is to walk in the light of Scripture.

But what happens when we sin and we surely will? What happens when we are weak and faltering and feeble and give in to sin? The promise is that if we are attempting to walk in the light, we can be assured that the blood of

Jesus Christ will cleanse us from all sin. But there is even more here than simply the fact that when we sin we can be forgiven.

The verse says that when we endeavor to walk in the light, when we live our lives according to the will of God, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us. In other words, Christ works in us to help us become more and more like him. He cleanses us. For example, look at this Scripture:

how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
(Hebrews 9:14)

There is a moral effect of the blood of Jesus Christ. As we strive to walk in the light our minds and our consciences are progressively cleansed from the ways of the world. Jesus Christ died for us and God raised him up from the dead not only to forgive us but also to reform us. The ongoing effect of the blood of Christ is to so cleanse us that we cannot be content with a life of sin. And when confronted by sin and we feel weak and feeble we can go to Christ for help.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as we *are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
(Hebrews 4:14-16)

The more we walk in the light the more our sins will pain us and we will seek Christ's help to overcome them. When our eyes are opened to the beauty and holiness of God and Christ we will want to walk in the light more and more. And when we ask for mercy and grace we will receive it.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
(1 John 1:8)

If someone never admits to being a sinner he or she can never be saved. And as a Christian, if I say I have no sin I am refusing to be honest with myself. I deceive myself and the truth is not in me. It's interesting, but sad, that sometimes we don't take our sins seriously. We like to think, "Oh, it's just a little mistake; it's

no big deal.” But it is a big deal. We are called to the high and privileged place of having fellowship with God. Why would I want that fellowship to be hindered?

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.
(1 John 1:9, 10)

What does it mean to confess our sins? The Greek word translated confess is *homologeō* and it means to say the same thing. When Scripture tells us that this attitude is wrong and that action is wrong, I need to say, “You’re right, Lord, I was wrong and I’m sorry.” And when we do God is faithful and just to forgive us.

I don’t want to call God a liar about who I am. As the Bible says, “Let God be true and every man a liar.”⁷ The Christian life is not a life totally free from sin. All of us struggle with unrighteousness. But it is a life where in our hearts, in our new nature, we long to live in the light; to be holy just as God is holy.

We desire to love as He loves, to be kind as He is kind. To walk in the light doesn’t mean we are perfect. It means that we are no longer walking in darkness; we no longer want to live like the unsaved. And we endeavor to be more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is how the apostle Paul put it:

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.
¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 3:12-14)

Let us strive to become more and more like Christ. Let us walk in the light. If we are in fellowship with God, let us be occupied with Him; let us live for His glory. Let us be ambitious to be found pleasing to Him. For then we will shine as the lights in a dark world where we are meant to shine.⁸

⁷ Romans 3:4)

⁸ Philippians 2:14, 15

