

“Walking in the Light”

July 24, 2011

Text: 1 John 1:5-7

The Bible often compares God, His nature/ways, with light.

Today’s text utilizes that particular symbolism, involving light.

There we will come to John’s words=> ***“God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all,”*** a simple statement w/ profound/complex meaning.

John won’t bother to define *“light”* here, because it is used so often in the Bible, his original readers wouldn’t need for him to define what it meant if they traced its usage back through Scripture.

In Scripture, the realm of light is God’s realm, & includes all His godly/benevolent influences over people.

On the other hand, the domain of darkness represents Satan’s influence over men, linking that darkness with things that are evil, frightening, deadly, and dangerous to man’s soul, because they result in God’s judgment.

E.g. in Rev 18:23, God will judge the wicked city of Babylon & consign it to darkness, declaring=> ***“The light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer.*** They won’t even have the light provided by the flickering flame of an oil lamp.

By contrast, God’s people will be safely housed in the New Jerusalem, bathed in light (Rev 21:23)=>

*“The city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the **glory** of God has **illuminated** it, and its **lamp** is the **Lamb**.”*

In a general sense, “light” throughout the Bible is associated with God’s glory.

Prob. the most obvious example of this, is God’s Shekinah glory.

Moses encountered it in the burning bush, the nation of Israel encountered it in the pillar of cloud/fire, and the High Priest encountered God’s Shekinah glory hovering over the Ark, in the Holy of Holies.

This was the same glory seen on Moses’ face whenever he returned from communing with God on Mt. Sinai.

It’s the glory the angel brought with him from heaven in

Lk 2:9=> *“An angel of the Lord suddenly stood before **them** [the shepherds], and the **glory** of the **Lord** shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.”*

It was also the glory seen in X’s face during the

Transfiguration in Mt 17:2=> *“He was **transfigured** before them; and His face **shone** like the sun, and His garments became as white as **light**.”*

According to I Tim 6:15, God dwells in the “**unapproachable light**” of His glory; or as Psa 104:1-2 puts it=>

*“O LORD my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with **splendor** and majesty, / Covering Thyself with **light** as with a cloak.”*

Though the light of God is unapproachable, it radiates outward to permeate all of His creation.

God's nature is like sunlight, revealing Himself, & bringing all things under His influence.

Sometimes His light warms, transforms spiritual death into spiritual life, & nurtures life so it too will bear light.

In other cases it defeats/overcomes/dispels-darkness, exposing the things hidden in darkness, & ultimately destroying evil, altogether.

Not only is God light in His essence, He is also the source of spiritual light for the believer, sending the blessing of His light/life to mankind.

So David can say=> *"The LORD is my **light** and my salvation"* (Psa 27:1).

As God's light enters men's hearts, it enables them to see His glory in His Son, Jesus X (2 Cor 4:6)=> *"God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the **light** of the **knowledge** of the **glory** of **God** in the face of **Christ**."*

When man embraces X by faith, that light of truth becomes spiritual life in him, because as John says=> *"In Him was **life**, and the **life** was the **light** of men"* (Jn 1:4).

Satan seeks to oppose God's light by blinding people spiritually, so they can't see it;

As a result, they neither understand, nor desire, the gospel.

2 Cor 4:4=> *"The god of this world [Satan] has **blinded** the minds of the unbelieving, that they might **not see the light** of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."*

Light represents God's glory generally, but in a specific sense, it is a metaphor of God's *truth* (on an intellectual level) and of His *righteousness* (on a moral level).

1st, light is God's *truth*, revealed to man in the darkness of his spiritual ignorance.

Psa 119:130=> *"The unfolding of Thy words gives **light**; It gives **understanding** to the simple."*

When Jesus came to earth, He came as light, radiating God's truth down from heaven to mankind.

When Jesus was an infant, a prophet named Simeon took Him in his arms & prayed=> *"My eyes have seen Thy salvation, / Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, / A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES"* (Lk 2:30-32).

Jesus would proclaim the truth of the gospel to Gentiles, bringing light to their darkness.

Until then, they would "walk in the darkness" of ignorance, under the influence of evil.

2nd, light also represents God's moral *righteousness* in Scripture.

Those who receive God's light/life through faith in X, begin to take on God's morally righteous character themselves.

So Eph 5:8-10 says, *"You were formerly darkness, but now you are **light** in the Lord; walk as children of **light** / (for the fruit of the light consists in all **goodness & righteousness & truth**), / trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."*

Part of the moral change that takes place in our hearts at the time of our regeneration, is God's pouring out of His love into our hearts (Rom 5:5).

So, if someone has no love, God's light/life have not reached into his heart, and he is not born again.

1 Jn 3:14=> *"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we **love** the brethren. He who does not **love** abides in death."*

In [Jn 3:19], Jesus used this metaphor of light/darkness to explain why all men don't come to the light of God and don't seek eternal life from Him=>

*"This is the judgment, that the **light** is come into the world, and men **loved** the **darkness** rather than the **light**; for their **deeds** were **evil**."*

Most people would assume they love God's light because it represents everything good.

But they don't.

They hate it.

To receive eternal life, a person must step into the bright light of God's holy influence, and let it penetrate his soul, like a spiritual X-ray.

That exposes the person's sin to God's judgment, causing him to repudiate/reject his sin.

Most people love their sin too much to let it be exposed like that, so that they feel obligated to give it up.

So Jn 3:20 says=> *"For everyone who does evil **hates** the **light**, and does not come to the **light**, lest his deeds*

*should be **exposed.***”

By contrast, those who love God’s truth, want to come into God’s light to put on display the transformation He has worked in their hearts, thus glorifying Him.

Verse 21=> *“But he who practices the truth comes to the **light**, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”*

In today’s text, John will apply this concept that “God is light” to the situation in the churches to which he is writing.

False teachers who would ultimately become Gnostics had begun teaching that everything physical is evil, and everything spiritual is good.

2 weeks ago we learned that, based on this false presupposition, they argued that Jesus could not have had a physical body—so His body must have been nothing more than an apparition.

In today’s text we will discover a 2nd heresy that resulted from the Gnostics’ faulty philosophy=>

That they had fellowship w/ God even while deeply involved in sin.

They claimed that sin affects only one’s body, leaving his spirit free to fellowship with God (an early form of easy-believism).

John is going to show that this false claim is based on a serious ignorance of God’s holiness, & of man’s sin.

Next time we'll see 2 more false claims the Gnostics made=>

- * That they were not sinners by their very nature,
- * That they had never actually committed any sins.

So the Gnostics made 3 claims (i.e., put forward 3 theses) about themselves and their sin.

We'll look at the 1st one this morning.

Today's text begins to resolve this controversy w/ 3 statements=>

- 1) John's Theme (God is light)
- 2) The Gnostics' (first) Thesis—that sin doesn't affect fellowship w/ God
- 3) John's Antithesis (we must walk in the light to have fellowship w/ God).

*** John's Theme**

[1 John 1:5]=> *“And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that **God is light**, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”*

With 3 words, John summarizes all that Jesus had taught while He was on earth=> “God is light.”

That captures the essence of God's nature.

Jesus had made many statements about many things, but in John's mind, the sum of it all was that “God is light,” in the full sense of that word, as we have just considered it.

God's light reveals Himself as perfect-truth/perfect-holiness (or righteousness—they are closely related, one by the practical outgrowth of the other).

And in case anyone missed the point, John adds=> “*In Him there is no darkness at all*”—there is no trace of anything untrue/unholy in God.

He is pure truth, and faultless righteousness.

For that reason, everything having anything to do with the darkness of sin is totally excluded from fellowship w/ Him, by His very nature.

He won’t have anything to do with evil/spiritual-untruth.

His unapproachable presence is seen in the light of His glory, which is full of truth/righteousness.

Ironically, however, He reaches out to bring all of creation under the influence of His holy will.

* He sent Jesus to earth as the radiance of His glory, to die as an atonement for men’s sins, so that we could become reconciled to God.

* But not only that—God makes us holy like Himself, so we can enter into a relationship with Him.

So, *by God’s grace, He eliminates all the darkness in us, floods our souls with His own light, & ushers us into fellowship with Himself.

That’s an amazing truth!

We once were darkness, but now we too have become light, and in that light, we have fellowship with God.

* **The Gnostics’ (first) Thesis**

[1 John 1:6]=> “*If we say that we have fellowship with Him*

[God the Father] *and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;*”

As I mentioned earlier, John will cite 3 Gnostic false claims, & he will begin each one with the words “*If we say...*”

In this 1st claim, he quotes them as saying they have intimate fellowship with God (i.e., that they’re saved) despite the fact that they “walk in darkness” (live sinful lives, having chosen to do so in order to gratify their own sinful desires). They believed their bodies sinned, but their spirits didn’t, so their spirits could live in fellowship with God, regardless of what their bodies did.

Though few people would repeat the Gnostic’s claim today, many “Xns” believe they can sin & still enjoy fellowship w/ God because their sins are covered by God’s grace, so the impurity/immorality/unholiness of their lives doesn’t really matter to God.

Like the Gnostics, they have an inadequate doctrine of sin, because they haven’t taken to heart the truth that

“God is light, & in Him there is no darkness at all.”

God has absolutely nothing to do with sin, & He will have nothing to do with those who practice sin, choosing their sin over Him, as an acceptable norm for their lives. Sin is always a barrier to fellowship with the God of light.

A person's profession of Xnity must be tested against the light of God, as it is manifested (or not manifested) in that person's life.

Because sin & God's light are absolute opposites and mutually exclusive, a person who constantly practices sin has no fellowship with God, regardless of what he may think/claim.

In 2 Cor 6:14, Paul asks=> *“What partnership have righteousness & lawlessness, or what fellowship has **light** with **darkness**?”*

The implied answer is=> None whatsoever!

If a person loves his sin more than he loves God and His righteousness, God will have no fellowship w/ him at all.

Does this mean there's no way for a sinner to ever fellowship with God?

No, God has made provision for us to fellowship with Him in spite of our sin=> The atoning death of Jesus X.

If we humbly acknowledge our sin to Him, repent of it, ask His forgiveness of it, & trust Jesus X to forgive us by His grace, the barrier of sin is removed.

Then we can/will have fellowship with the Father/Son.

I.e., we must take our sin as seriously as Jesus did=>

He died to propitiate God's wrath against it.

But when someone does what the Gnostics did (simply denying that their sin matters to God), they make fellowship with God unattainable by their lying.

John doesn't soft-sell it by calling it "error"—but lying.

They know intuitively that God is perfect light, and that He will allow no darkness at all to enter into fellowship with Himself.

They know it, but they deny it, as if their wishing it weren't true could make it so.

And it's not just that they're telling a lie.

They're living a lie, by not practicing the truth.

Their whole life is a lie.

They are lying to God & to themselves by refusing to order their lives in harmony with God's revealed will.

Their lives are totally inclined towards disobedience to Him, & opposition against His holy nature.

Their claim to have fellowship with Him is ridiculous, and down deep within themselves, they know it.

But they're in denial.

If they were truly born again, they could not simply ignore their iniquity & live/walk in darkness.

That would be impossible, because they'd possess God's light/life, be new creatures in X, & have the H.S. dwelling w/i them.

Genuine saving faith will always manifest itself in a love of personal righteousness, & a commitment to personal holiness.

Xns don't live that way perfectly, but that's their desire.

* **John's Antithesis** (we must walk in the light if we are to have any fellowship with God).

[1 John 1:7]=> *“but if we walk in the light as **He Himself** [the Father] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*

John used the word “we” in verse 6, and he uses it again here because he is stating a general principle of the Xn life, which applies to all men (including himself)=>

The principle is this:

* God forever exists in the light of His glory, truth, and righteousness because He is light by His very nature.

* And the Xn is to imitate God by living his life in God's light, with honesty, sincerity & a good conscience before Him, not allowing any sin to ever take up permanent residence w/i his heart.

Eph 5:1=> *“Be imitators of God, as beloved children.”*

The Xn can do so—not perfectly; but committedly.

As a Xn walks in the light (God's realm of truth/purity where all things are done to His glory), the believer has fellowship with fellow believers, who are also sincerely/diligently walking in the light, because they too have fellowship with God through faith in X.

This is the very antithesis of what the Gnostics taught=> that man can fellowship w/ God even as he habitually practices sin. It's also the opposite of what many "Xns" believe today. But it's the absolute truth=> There is no fellowship with other Xns or with God apart from personal holiness/righteousness.

It's not simply that they're temporarily out of fellowship with Him;

It's that they have never truly had fellowship with Him.

In [Isa 2:5], Isaiah says to Israel=> “Come, house of Jacob and let us walk in the *light* of the **LORD.”**

Isaiah's next words help us better understand what it means to walk in the light, by describing its opposite.

Isa 2:6=> “**They** [the Jews] *are filled with influences from the east, And they are soothsayers like the Philistines, And they strike bargains with the children of foreigners.*”

Those who don't walk in the light may consider themselves God's people, but their lives are filled with sinful, worldly influences that are foreign to their faith.

So they walk in darkness, not in the light.

Isa 2:7=> “*Their land has also been filled with silver and gold, And there is no end to their treasures* [love of this world's wealth has shaped their priorities];

“*Their land has also been filled with horses, And there is no end to their chariots.*”

They no longer depend on God for protection and security, but on their own strength/devices/abilities.

Isa 2:8=> *“Their land has also been filled with idols; They worship the work of their hands, That which their fingers have made.”*

This is the bottom line=> without realizing it, they have become idolaters, worshipping false gods.

Walking in the light is the opposite of what these Jews were doing.

It is resolutely resisting worldliness, with its glorification of personal pleasure, & reliance on self.

It's living with God as the central focus and ultimate reality of one's life.

It's living in joyful/loving obedience to His will.

It is choosing to live in the awareness of God's presence.

In the words of Rom 6:4, it is walking in newness of life, as we are enabled to do so, by the H.S. (Rom 8:4).

John lists 2 results of our walking in the light.

The 1st is what we just saw=> fellowship with other believers.

The 2nd is cleansing—the truth that the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin.

“Cleanses” (vs 7) is a present tense verb, which means the blood (the death) of X continually cleanses away the sin of those who are walking in the light, because they're born again.

As soon as they sin, their sin is immediately cleansed.

X's bloody death can accomplish this, because He is both human (*“Jesus”*) & divine (the *“Son”* of God).

X constantly cleanses us as we sin here on earth, & in heaven He will cleanse us to the uttermost from even the possibility of sinning, by glorifying us.

Because we are cleansed, we have fellowship with God, & sin can never again affect our standing with God.

Jesus constantly cleanses His Church & the individuals who make up the Church.

Eph 5:25=> *“Christ also loved the church & gave Himself up for her; / that He might sanctify her, having **cleansed** her by the washing of water with the word [that’s what’s happening right now], / that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless” (25-27).*

** As a result of this cleansing, believers abhor their sin.

It’s contrary to their new-born nature; they can’t endure it;
They hate it!

When the HS first drew them, God’s light caused them great sorrow.

The light hurt their spiritual eyes, because they’d been in darkness for so long, they were accustomed to it.

Those who are in darkness have no heart for the things of God (Scripture/prayer/worship/fellowship).

They may be religious outwardly, but the H.S. has done no work of grace within them, so their hearts are still darkened.

But when God's light enters their hearts, they become intensely honest/truthful in their dealings with Him.

Hypocrisy/pretense are banished w/i them (driven out by the Spirit's conviction), and their hearts can't keep from crying out, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Suddenly, their usual flippancy regarding sin evaporates in the heat of God's light, and is replaced w/ passionate fervency/sincerity.

There's no longer any thought of game-playing or playing fast/loose with God's mercy/grace.

There's no more hesitation between 2 opinions, but only a dead earnest seeking to be right with God, and a hunger/thirst after righteousness.

As we are here in this place of worship, demonstrating outward respect for the things of God, I would ask you directly, Has this been your experience? Has God's light invaded your heart?

After that initial pain of self-discovered sin, has the light of God broken through, bringing great joy to your heart?

It should have, as your mourning for sin has turned to faith in Jesus for sin's forgiveness, and faith has turned into joy because of God's gracious dealings with you, graciously forgiving you and giving you new life.

As a result, Psa 97:11 says=> "*Light is sown like seed for the righteous, And **gladness** for the upright in heart.*"

I.e., as righteousness triumphs in the sinner's heart, he rejoices in his new uprightness that's growing like a seed in his heart.

One of the effects of walking in the light as spiritual newborns is an openness to the Spirit's examination of our hearts.

Those in darkness avoid exposure to God's light;

But the godly desire for it to reveal their sins, so they can confess them, & recapture and once again the purity of their salvation.

At one time, they would have felt threatened by these

words in Heb 4:13=> *"There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."*

But now they are no longer threatened, having placed

supreme trust in God's grace, & X's cleansing power.

They can now pray with David=> *"Search me, O God, and*

know my heart; Try me & know my anxious thoughts; / And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way" (Psa 139:23-24).

Those who have attained such happy rest through faith in Jesus

X, find it their joy to walk in the light, as God Himself is in the light.

They have fellowship with Him, and with other believers, loving them with God's own love, poured into their hearts by the H.S.

And they thrive in knowing that whatever sins they may
commit, will immediately/constantly be washed away
by their beloved Savior's blood.

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Text: 1 John 1:5-7

1. In a general sense “light” throughout the Bible is associated with God’s [12 glory].

Rev 18:23; 21:23; Lk 2:29; Mt 17:2; I Tim 6:15; Psa 104:1-2

2. God’s nature is like sunlight revealing Himself and bringing all things under His [20 influence].

Psa 27:1; II Cor 4:6; Jn 1:4; II Cor 4:4

3. Light is God’s [12 truth] revealed to man in the darkness of his spiritual ignorance.

Psa 119:130; Jn 8:12

4. Light also represents God’s moral [28 righteousness] in Scripture.

Eph 5:8-10; Rom 5:5; I Jn 3:14; Jn 3:19

5. To receive eternal life, a person must step into the bright light of God’s [10 holy] influence.

Jn 3:20, 21

6. In today’s text we will discover a second heresy that resulted from the Gnostics’ faulty philosophy: that they had fellowship with God even while deeply involved in [8 sin].

Today’s text resolves this controversy in 3 statements...

*** John’s Theme**

[1 John 1:5]

7. God’s light reveals Himself as perfect [12 truth] and perfect holiness.
8. We once were darkness, but now we too have become light, and in that light, we have [24 fellowship] with God.

*** The Gnostics’ Thesis**

[1 John 1:6]

9. God has absolutely nothing to do with sin, and He will have nothing to do with those who choose their sin over Him as an acceptable [10 norm] for their lives.

II Cor 6:14

10. When someone does what the Gnostics did (simply deny that their sin matters to God), they make fellowship with God [26 unattainable].

* **John's Antithesis**

[1 John 1:7]

11. The Christian is to imitate God by living his life in God's light with honesty, sincerity and a good [22 conscience] before Him.

Eph 5:1; Isa 2:5, 6, 7, 8

12. John lists 2 results of our walking in the light: fellowship with other believers, and the blood of Jesus [18 cleanses] us from all sin.

Eph 5:25-27

13. When God's light enters hearts, they become intensely honest in their dealings with Him; hypocrisy and pretense are [20 banished].

Psa 97:11; Heb 4:13; Psa 139:23-24

14. Those who have attained rest through faith in Jesus Christ have fellowship with Him and with other believers; and they thrive in knowing that sins they commit will constantly be [14 washed] away.