

Walking in the Light
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1 John 1:5–2:6

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote:

“Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying.”

How does Emerson's quote apply to living the Christian life?

Our natural tendency is to sin. The Holy Spirit enables believers to avoid sin. But when we do sin, Jesus pleads our case with the Father saying He's already paid for that sin on the cross! Obedience and confession allow us to walk “in the light” and have fellowship with Christ.

The Big Idea: “Fellowship with God is characterized by a life of holiness, confession, trusting Jesus, and obedience.” (Explore the Bible)

This morning I want us to imagine we're having a cup of coffee with the Apostle John. We sit down at the Starbucks in Ephesus and say, *“John, you've been like a Spiritual father to me, but I'm concerned and confused about some things. I'm confused when I see people who profess to be Christians...event teach about the Christian faith...yet their lives don't seem to match up with what you're teaching, John. And I'm concerned about ME! I placed my faith in Christ, but...I'm ashamed to admit it John...I still catch myself sinning. Do you think I'm not saved?”*

- Wise, old John picks up a napkin and pulls out a quill and says let me show me some things.
- The first thing John writes is GOD IS LIGHT. Then he explains. Look at verse five:

5This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

• Was this John's original thought? Who else said it?

John 8:12 (ESV)

12Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

- This goes back even further, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah. 42:6

Isaiah 42:6 (ESV)

6“I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,

- **Who was Isaiah prophesying about?**
- I counted 18 times Jesus is referred to a light in scripture.
- **Why do you think God chose to compare himself to light? How is God like light? What do light and darkness usually represent in the Bible?**
- Verse five: Not only is God light, “in him is no darkness at all.” **What does that mean?**
- **Can light and dark co-exist?** What if I come in room and just turn on a flashlight? Dimmer?

- **Why does the holiness of God not allow for a dimmer switch, dark corners, or mood lighting (even a little darkness)? Why is this CRUCIAL to the reality of who God is?**

From the Explore the Bible Leader's Guide:

"Until believers are persuaded that God is a hundred percent right and good all of the time, there is no point in going on. Without this foundation in place nothing else in Christianity makes sense."

- John writes on the napkin again. "We know God as LIGHT let's talk about...DARKNESS."

6If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

- In this verse, what does it mean to **"walk in darkness?"**
- **How could we spot when someone is walking in darkness?**
- **What does he mean "If we say we have fellowship with him (God)?"**
- **So, what is John saying about people in this verse?**
- John summarizes in verses seven and eight:

7But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

- Verse seven says "...if we walk in the light." **What are some behaviors that might indicate someone is "walking in the light" as God is light?**
- Remember, we're studying THEOLOGY. This passage speaks to the doctrine of JUSTIFICATION. **What is that?**
- We learned in Hebrews 9:22, to be cleansed from sin there must be a blood sacrifice.
- This verse also speaks to SANCTIFICATION? **What is that?**

Warren Wiersbe:

"The New Testament calls the Christian life a "walk." This walk begins with a step of faith when people trust Christ as their Savior. But salvation is not the end—it is only the beginning—of spiritual life. "Walking" involves progress, and Christians are supposed to advance in the spiritual life. Just as a child must learn to walk and must overcome many difficulties in doing so, a Christian must learn to "walk in the light." And the fundamental difficulty involved here is this matter of sin."

- Jesus' death not only cleanses believers from sin at conversion —justification — it also keeps on cleansing believers throughout our lives —sanctification.
- *"But, John, I try to witness to friends and they don't think they ARE sinners. They say: 'I believe people are basically...(what?)' or 'I'm not as bad as...(who?)'"*
- John picks up the pen and writes on the napkin: DECEIVED.

8If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

- I have a question for those people who say most people are basically good and moral: If you believe that, would you send your wife or daughter to a bad part of town alone at night? Would you leave the doors to your house unlocked when you go away from home?
- *"Okay, maybe not ALL people are basically good. But religious people are basically good."*

- **Do you have some examples of why that isn't true?** Here's what's true about all people:

Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)

9The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

- *“John, what hope do any of us have if we have such a DARK SIDE to our nature?”*
- John writes on the napkin: CONFESSION, FORGIVENESS & FAITHFULNESS

9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- The Greek word CONFESS in this verse is a compound of two terms: “to speak” and “the same.” **How does that apply to confession of sins? How do we normally speak (to ourselves) about our sin? How does unconfessed sin affect mankind's relationship with God? Unbelievers? Believers?**

Our lesson writer commented:

“This verse focuses on “fatherly forgiveness” rather than on “judicial forgiveness.” We received judicial forgiveness (justification) once for all time when we believed in Jesus as Savior. After conversion, however, we still falter on occasion and commit sin. Such sin breaks the intimacy between us and our Heavenly Father. When we confess our sins, our faithful, loving Father forgives us, purifies us from all unrighteousness, and restores us to fellowship. This is part of our sanctification.”

- John says: *“See, even after you're saved you will commit sins. But God will forgive if you are sure to confess your sins.”*
- *“But John, what about people who say: ‘I may not be perfect but...(fill in the blank.)’”*
- John writes on the napkin: LIAR and asks, *“Would you call God a liar?”*

10If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

- Have you ever considered that someone who thinks they're not bad enough to need God's gift of salvation is calling God a liar? **What does Romans 3:23 say?**
- The coffee is getting cold but the discussion is good. John continues chapter two verse one:

1My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

- Let's pause there. The goal is not to sin. **What are some strategies to avoid sinning?**

Psalms 119:11 (NKJV)

11Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

- Not sinning is a high standard. The age old question: *“If a tree falls in the forest...(what?)”*
- Okay, **if I sin and no one around me can see it is it still sin? Why? How convicted are we of the the sins other people can't detect? How does 1 John 2:16 speak to this?**
- *“But John, I try NOT to sin. But I still do!”* John continues in the rest of verse one:

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

2He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

- **What kind of image does the word “advocate” bring to mind? Who gets to have Jesus as their “attorney” before God the Father? What kinds of things might Jesus be saying to God the Father about us? What does PROPITIATION mean?**
- Jesus’ death was the means by which God’s righteous anger was turned from sinners.
- *“But, John, how to I really KNOW I’m really SAVED?” How can I have some indication that my family and friends are saved?”* John says, *“Use this simple test.”* He writes down: KEEP

3And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

4Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

5but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:

6whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

So, What’s The Takeaway (John)?

- This passage really is as straightforward as a friend writing bullet points on a napkin!
- God is LIGHT totally pure and holy
- Our nature is DARKNESS. People are born sinful by nature
- The two cannot exist together.
- God sent His son Jesus to die as the sacrifice for our sins, so we can be SAVED and “walk in the light” like Jesus.
- Though we’re saved, we still sin...hopefully not as much...but we still sin.
- A danger, even for believers is to DECEIVE ourselves that we’re not so bad. This leads to falling back into a pattern of sin.
- But God says if we CONFESS (agree with God about) those sins, He will FORGIVE us and CLEANSE us like new.
- If I’m so bad how can I KNOW I’m really saved?
- I won’t be SINLESS but I should SIN-LESS...have a DESIRE to obey God’s teaching and follow His ways.
- His Holy Spirit living in me will allow me to be able to do that.
- How do you feel after pondering these verses? Reassured? Convicted? Thankful? Maybe we all need to have a few more cups of coffee with John?