

“WALKING IN THE LIGHT.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: I John 1:5-10

Introduction.

Last week we heard John say:

That which we have heard and seen with our eyes and touched with our hands we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with God and so that your joy may be complete.

The point of the Christian life is to have fellowship with the one, true living God. Now John tells what they proclaimed. The message has two parts, what the world needs to know about God and what the world needs to know about sin (and ourselves).

This is the foundational message of the Bible and of all of life. This is the Gospel message. This is the message we have received from Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

What the world needs to know about God.

God is light, vs. 5.

This is the testimony of Scripture from beginning to end.

Genesis 1:1-5 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Isaiah 9:2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

Isaiah 60:19 The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.

God who is light sent His Son to be the light of the world.

John 1:4-5 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 8:12 I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

John 12:46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

I Timothy 6:16 who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.

Revelation 21:23-25 The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.

That God is light means two things, that He is the revelation of truth, He is absolute and unwavering truthfulness in both word and deed. He is the light by which we know truth.

And it means God's character is perfectly pure, absolutely holy, utterly righteous, with complete integrity. He alone dwells in the radiance and majesty and splendor of unapproachable light.

John likes to strengthen his arguments by stating it in both the positive and the negative. God is light, and *God is not darkness*.

To say there is no darkness in God is to say there is not the slightest hint of darkness or death or sin or evil in God.

Just as the sun has no hint of darkness or coldness and is not the source of either, so God has no sin or evil and is not the source of sin or evil.

Why does John begin with God's holiness (light) rather than His love (I John 4:8)?

If you start with love you won't understand God's plan of salvation and why cross was necessary. The cross was necessary because of God's holiness. To start with holiness shows us how and why there can be no agreement or fellowship between light and darkness. Our fellowship must be on His terms, not ours.

What the world needs to know about sin.

Humanity has a sin problem. That certainly has been driven home to all of us in this past week by the news out of Washington. Our world, our nation, all of us have a serious sin problem and it affects all of us in many ways.

John uses three “if we say” statements to expose the truth about sin. Three denials, like Peter.

Don't lie to others, vss. 6-7.

If we say we have fellowship with God, that is that we are a friend of God, that we have a real relationship with God, and yet we continue to walk in darkness, in fellowship with whatever is evil, wicked, sinful, contrary to God, then we are lying, making a gross contradiction, saying something that is not true and cannot be true.

Our actions contradict our words. We are living in hypocrisy, lying to others about who we really are. We are living a lie.

This denial says we can claim to be Christians and we still keep up our old sinful ways.

Walking means living habitually in darkness, meaning a determined decision to sin, to choose darkness.

You can pass yourself off as a Christian and not be a Christian. You can give the appearance of being a Christian and not be a Christian. You can say “Lord, Lord” and not have Jesus as your Lord or even know Him as Lord.

When some calls the house and asks for Bob and claims to be a friend of mine, Phama knows they are lying. If they knew me they would know my name.

If we say we walk in the light but our words and actions are full of darkness, then the truth exposes us. To be in the darkness is to be where God is not.

Have you ever done something you didn't want anyone else to know, something you tried to hide? Have you ever looked around before you did something or went somewhere? Have you ever hidden something from your spouse or parents or teacher or friend or co-worker? Have you ever lied to cover up? Deleted texts or pictures or history or cookies?

Do you make excuses, blame others, get defensive quickly?

If on the other hand, we continue to walk in the light then we will have fellowship with God.

Notice something crucial about the next phrase, “and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” To walk in the light in fellowship with God does not mean we don't sin. It means we are being honest about sin and continuing to repent and be cleansed of our sin.

If darkness is a constant way of life for us then we are not in fellowship with God, but if we stumble and fall in darkness and get up and run to the light, then we are in fellowship with God. Walking in the light doesn't turn us into perfect people, it turns us into honest repentant people.

As Calvin says, even though we may err and groan under the burden of our flesh, even though we may stumble and fall and sin and sin again, if we fear God and fear our sin and hate it and repent quickly and turn away from our sin again and again, this is called walking in the light.

There is no sin that can keep those who fear God and love God from fellowship with God, the blood of Jesus is sufficient. Though our sins are many and great, more than the hairs of our heads, the blood of Jesus is sufficient.

We all can walk in the light only by the continuous washing of the blood of Jesus.

God created a lot of creatures to be nocturnal, like owls, bats, possums, and cockroaches. We are not one of them. We are not created to live in darkness, we are created to live in the light.

Don't lie to yourself, vss. 8-9.

If we lie to others eventually we will start lying to ourselves. And when we start believing our own lies, this is called self-deception. It happens when we walk in sin and darkness so long our consciences become seared (I Timothy 4:2).

It is stunning how easily we can deceive ourselves, become proud and unteachable. We say our sin isn't so bad, there are worse sins and lots of other people do worse sins, and before long we are saying it wasn't really a sin at all.

When we say we are without sin and without guilt we are saying we are not in danger of God's judgment.

To say I have no sin is to say I don't need Jesus, I don't need an advocate before the judgment seat of God, I can represent myself.

In the legal world they say he who has himself for a lawyer has a fool for a client. And this is especially true in the spiritual world. To defend yourself as righteous before a righteous and holy God is the very pinnacle of folly.

To say we have no sin is not just a lie, but a denial of reality. There is no truth in us. The great British preacher Charles Spurgeon had a way of getting right to the point:

“The idea of having no sin is a delusion; you are altogether deceived if you say so; the truth is not in you, and you have not seen things in the true light; you must have shut your eyes to the high requirements of the law, you must be a stranger to your own heart, you must be blind to your own conduct every day, and you must have forgotten to search your thoughts and to weigh your motives, or you would have detected the presence of sin. He who cannot find water in the sea is not more foolish than the man who cannot perceive sin in his members. As the salt flavors every drop of the Atlantic, so does sin affect every atom of our nature. It is so sadly there, so abundantly there, that if you cannot detect it you are deceived” (Charles Spurgeon).

John counters this with verse 9, one of the most memorized and most loved verses in the Bible among Christians.

Those who conceal their sin are liars, those who confess their sin are forgiven. Confession isn't just admitting you've sinned, it's agreeing with God about our sin.

He was two things about God. God is faithful and just.

God is faithful because He promised to forgive sins when we confess, and He keeps the promise.

Isaiah 1:18 Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Jeremiah 31:34 For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

There is something here that God cannot do. God cannot cast away any sinner who comes to Him in humility and confession. A broken and contrite heart He cannot despise or turn away. If we come to God in truth, He will receive us.

God is just. A just judge gives us what we deserve and punishes us. How is God just and I am not judged? Because of the cross God can be just and justifier.

We are not saved by God setting aside of the law, but by fulfilling of the law in Christ.

God is just because the penalty for our sins has already been paid for

God cannot be unjust, God cannot go back on His Word. If we repent, He will forgive.

God would be unjust if He didn't forgive us, when we repent in the name of Jesus.

God has bound Himself by His Word.

Don't lie about God, vs. 10.

This is the most serious denial. If we lie to others and then lie to ourselves, before long we will lie to God. Not only does he claim not to be sinning now, but he claims he has never sinned.

It is not only deception, it is blaspheme. It says God is a liar.

God says we are sinners. If we say we aren't then we are saying God is a liar. God's Word says we are sinners. If we say we aren't then the truth of God's Word is not in us.

If we deny or hide or rationalize sin, we are challenging God's Word and character. If sin is not serious or real, then Jesus didn't have to die, and God way over played His hand. We don't need atonement, we don't need justification, we don't need the cross or blood, we don't need forgiveness. If we have no sin, then we don't need a Savior.

The Lord's Supper is an empty ritual, a fraud. Our confession of sin is just an overactive guilt conscience. In other words, God is a liar and all of His Bible is fake news, a fraud.

What does God say in His Word?

Psalm 14:3 They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

Eccl 7:20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

He has condemned the entire human race of sin. When God makes an accusation, the charge is true. It is unimpeachable, undeniable.

Implications and application.

What is the state of your heart right now? Is it cold, is it hard, is it numb, is it dull, is it unresponsive to this message? Are you thinking it doesn't really apply to you? Are you thinking you really can't think of anything to repent of, you have been doing pretty good for a while now?

Then come to God and tell Him you are cold, hard, dull, insensitive to your sin and thoughtless about any offense you might have against Him, repent of that for you know you are a sinner and if God says you are then it's true. Tell God you are a worse sinner than you know you are, that He sees the depth of depravity in your heart far more clearly than you do.

Where are you still living in the dark? What one aspect of darkness are you hanging onto? What part of your fallen, fleshly nature still has a hook in you and you aren't confessing or repenting or killing it or dying to it?

Some unholy habit, some worldly desire, some ungodly practice, some thoughts, words or actions?

What are some practical ways to walk in the light as God is in the light and to have fellowship with God and with Jesus?

Walk in purity, come in out of the shadows, put off what is of darkness or wants to be hidden, each time you step into the shadows, turn back out and repent. Hate it, kill it.

Walk in truth, walk in integrity, speak the truth in love, let your words to light, words that heal not hurt, words that build up not tear down, words that encourage not discourage.

Walk in wisdom. Walk making the most of the time, using your time to the best advantage.

Walk in love.

Walk in forgiveness. Forgiveness is the center of the Gospel and of our fellowship with God and each other.

Walk in sacrifice.

Let us not just claim to walk in the light, let us pursue the light and actually walk in it.

This includes increasingly being aware of the darkness that yet indwells our hearts. I make as much progress in the Gospel by know more about my sin as I do in knowing more about God.

If God's light is shining on us more and more, it will expose as much of our darkness as it will reveal His nature.

By the light of God, we see the depths to which we have fallen, and how deep and dark our pit is. And by the light of God we see the glorious heights to which we are created to rise and which the blood of Jesus makes possible.

Confess all your sins to God. Ask God to bring them into the light so you can confess them. Notice it says confess your sins not confess your sin. This means confess your specific sins, name them, call them what they are.

Confess your past sins to God, confess the sins of your youth, confess all indiscretions, all folly, all stupidity, all addictions and call them all sin.

Psalm 25:7 Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!

Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

24 And see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting!

Confess quickly. Don't let the sun go down on your anger means don't leave sin lingering and undealt with. Don't let the sun go down on your sin, whether with God or others.

Because we daily sin, the only way to keep our fellowship with God is to honestly and daily confess our sin.

God wants to forgive you.

God wants you to have a clean heart and a clean conscience.

God wants to set you free from the bondage of indwelling sin.

We were made to walk with God in the garden in the cool of the evening.

We were made to walk with God in the light as He is in the light.

God has sent His Son to enable us to be reconciled to Him who dwells in inapproachable light.

God has made it possible to walk in the light.

http://www.trinitystudycenter.com/1john/1john_1-5-10.php

I was made to walk in the light with God and He has enabled this to happen. I can rejoice over the revealing of the darkness in my life, because as it is confessed and handed over, I am letting God both forgive me, and take out this darkness slowly and surely. He is cleansing me, taking away the dirt that is polluting me and my relationships. And can I trust Him as He does this? Absolutely!! It is His business and pleasure to destroy the darkness and make me more and more able to receive His light and love. Every day we are faced with the realization of the sin that remains in our lives, as we anxiously consider our circumstances or interact with our children, spouses and friends. John is assuring us that that is exactly where God wants us: aware of our sin so that we can hand it right over to Him to forgive and cleanse us from it. When you see that you are not trusting Him, then trust Him enough to hand Him your anxiety so He can heal you.