

“GOD IS LIGHT”

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

In these verses of Scripture, the Apostle John plainly declares the character of God and the character of those who have fellowship with God. **Here we see that the only grounds upon which a sinful man can have fellowship with the infinitely holy God is through the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ.** And the children of God are given a blessed promise from the Gospel of the cleansing and forgiving efficacy of the blood of Christ.

SOLEMN WARNING

But John is also sounding a word of solemn warning against a pretentious and hypocritical profession of religion. Here John draws a clear distinction between an empty profession and the gracious reality of godliness. He warns us of the danger of saying more than we have experienced. To have fellowship with God is the great privilege of those who are united to

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Christ by faith. But to say that we have fellowship with God, while we are walking in darkness is a vain presumption. Every profession will be tried with fire. Let us, therefore, see to it that our profession of faith is based upon and arises from the light of revealed truth.

There were certain in John’s day who said, “We have fellowship with God.” How they came to make such a profession we do not know. Perhaps they had come to such a conclusion by philosophical speculation, by exact reasoning, or by quiet meditation. Whatever the road, they said they had reached the city of God, and were in communion with the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy. Yet, they walked in darkness, rejecting the light of Divine Revelation.

In these verses John draws the line very tightly, and judges with unflinching honesty. He is not at all inclined to the licentious charity of our day, which allows that men may be true Christians no matter what they believe or how they live. The disciple

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whom Jesus loved spoke like the Son of Thunder he was, when he had to deal with sham and hypocrisy in religion. But John’s thunderous words reveal a heart of genuine love. He so loved the souls of men that he would not allow them the security of a carnal profession, resting in a lie. You see, it is the part of true love to be honest, and to expose that which would be injurious to those it loves. Those who are willing to gloss over falsehood and heresy love only in word.

That which John shows us here is very clear: — If men and women profess to be believers, and refuse to receive and obey God’s Revelation, they are liars, and have no part in the truth.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Thus we see the lie which John warns us to avoid. But he has a positive word as well. Over against the lie, he places the truth, so that we can see the difference. **True Christianity, true saving faith always brings fallen sinners into fellowship with**

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God. John describes Christianity as walking in the light. This implies several things.

- **Walking implies confidence.** Believing God, we walk before him and walk through this world of relentless turmoil, opposition, trial, warfare, and heartache with the peace of confidence, confidence not in ourselves but in God our Savior: — Confidence in His Purpose — His Providence — His Promise — His Goodness — His Grace — His Son!
- **Walking implies action.** Certainly this is a proper character of Christianity. Christianity feeds upon meditation, but it displays itself in activity. Fellowship with God necessitates action. To be with God, we must walk with God. To walk with God is to be actively engaged in seeking His glory, obeying His Word, and doing His will. It is not those who profess to be Christians who are the children of God, but those who do His will.

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- **Walking with God implies perseverance and continuance.** Walking is not this step, or that step. It is the continual pace. So, it is not the man who begins well, but the one who continues, who is the true believer. Perseverance is essential. The Christian is not a man who repented, believed, and confessed Christ. He is the man who goes on repenting, believing, and confessing Christ.
- **Walking with God implies progress.** There is such a thing as the goose-step; and I am afraid many professed believers are very familiar with it. They are exactly where they used to be. They have not advanced at all. And they seem to congratulate themselves that they have not gone backward; but those who walk with God progress. They grow in grace and knowledge. They go on from strength to strength. They are not like Israel, wandering year after year in the wilderness, but never coming nearer the land of promise. Those who walk with God are marching onward to Zion. With every step, they can say, *“Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”*

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My question, dear friends, is this: — Are we walking with God in the simplicity and sincerity of faith, or are we walking in darkness?

The title of my message found in 1st John 1:5. — **“GOD IS LIGHT.”** From that subject, the Apostle John draws some very practical lessons. I trust that God the Holy Spirit will be our Teacher and give us grace to know and understand that which is here written for our learning.

Proposition: In these verses the Holy Spirit teaches us that God in his essential character is infinitely holy, and that the only way in which a sinful man can be accepted into fellowship with God is by being made holy, made holy by the cleansing blood of Christ.

Divisions: I want you to see three things in these six verses of Scripture.

1. John delivers a solemn message concerning the character of God (v. 5).

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2. John faithfully warns us against all pretentious religion (vv. 6, 8, 10).
3. John tenderly assures us of the merits of Christ (vv. 7, 9).

GOD’S CHARACTER

To begin with – **John delivers a solemn message concerning the character of God.** — *“This then is the message which we have heard of him; and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all”* (v. 5).

In those words, John gives in summary God’s entire revelation of his character. The prophets of the Old Testament constantly declared to men the majestic holiness of God. Every attribute of God is marked by the light of his holiness. He is holy in power, holy in wisdom, holy in justice, holy in mercy, holy in love, and holy in sovereignty. Whatever God is, and whatever God does, of this we may be sure, *“God is Light.”* And it is the light of God’s character that reveals the gross darkness of sin. It is only when God

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reveals his glorious light in the heart of a sinner that a person is truly convinced of sin. And so again, you have **the twofold message of evangelism**. It is a solemn message indeed.

- Man is nothing but darkness and sin, perishing under the wrath of God.
- And God is Light. So great is the light of his being that he consumes the darkness of sin.

Let's see now what John says about God's character.

This is the message sent from the King of kings to sinful men: — **“God is Light.”** This is the message that God revealed by sending his Son as the Light of the world. This is the message of Christ, both in his eternal deity and perfect humanity. — *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. That was the true Light, which lightheth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not”* (John 1:4-5, 9-10).

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This is the message that John and the other apostles heard of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ declared unto men the very essence of God’s holy character. And what did he say? — *“God is Light.”*

- God is pure and holy, One in whom there is no mixture of darkness.
- God is the Spirit of Truth, and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.
- Our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, declared that He is himself that True Light, by which God is revealed to men.

This is the message of the Gospel. — *“God is Light.”* The Gospel is a declaration of the Person and Character of God. And it declares that the only way in which poor, fallen, guilty, sinful men and women can be received by God is if they are made like him, pure and holy. Here is the infinite, sovereign majesty and holiness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, *“who only hath immortality dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man*

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hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:16).

This is the message which is revealed to us and in us by the new birth. — *“God is Light.”* Conversion is nothing less than the light of the glory of God shining into our hearts, revealing our sin and creating us anew in the image of Christ. *“The light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God,”* has shined into our hearts us; commanding *“the light to shine out of darkness, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (2 Corinthians 4:4, 6).

This is the message that we declare to men. — *“God is Light and in him is no darkness at all.”* Having heard and learned of God, we delight to declare to men the excellency of His Being and the majesty of His Person. — **There is no true declaration of the Gospel where the essential character of God is not declared.**

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When we say that God is light, we mean that He is pure and holy in His nature and works. God is so holy that He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Behold, the heavens are not pure in His sight; and He charges His angels with folly. God is so perfectly holy that the angels cover themselves when they speak of His holiness.

When we say that God is Light, we mean that He is the Giver of all light. God dwells in light. He is clothed with majesty. And the very fact of His being light implies that He makes a revelation of Himself. — There is a natural revelation of God in creation and providence. — It is God alone who gives to men the light of reason and understanding. — But John is specifically referring to God’s gracious revelation of Himself in Christ.

- **The unbeliever despises God’s revelation.** *“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved”* (John

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3:19-20). — The true proclamation of the Gospel necessitates an exposure of man’s utter sinfulness.

- **To his own people, the Lord Jesus Christ reveals the light of God’s glory and grace.** In His light we see light, light which delights, refreshes, and strengthens our souls.

In God, who is Light, there is no possibility of darkness. He is *“the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning”* (James 1:17). **In God’s character there is no possibility of darkness.**

- There is no darkness of evil. God is as full of purity and holiness as the sun is of light.
- There is no darkness of ignorance.
- There is no darkness of error.

And the holy, pure, spotless God of Light will never admit any darkness in His presence. If ever a man, whose very being is darkness, is brought into union with God, whose very Being is Light, there must be a radical change in the sinner’s nature.

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LESSONS

There are some very practical lessons that we should draw from this solemn declaration of God’s character. — *“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all!”*

1. We should learn to reverence and worship God.
2. We should learn to fear Him. — *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. For our God is a consuming fire!”*
3. We should learn to look at sin in the light of God’s holy character.
4. We should learn the foolishness of trying to deceive God or hide anything from Him. He is Light, penetrating, discerning, consuming light!

PRETENCE IS FOLLY

In the second place — **John faithfully warns us against all pretentious religion.** Pretence is folly before God who is Light! Hypocrisy before God is insane. Read verses 6, 8, and 10. — *“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness,*

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we lie and do not the truth...If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his Word is not in us.”

In these verses, the Apostle categorically denounces all unregenerate men, all unbelievers as liars. And he places them in three categories. There are religious liars. There are self-deceiving liars. And there are blasphemous liars. But all men by nature are liars. **Bro. Rolfe Barnard used to say that no honest man will go to hell.** Honest men have seen the light of God’s glory. They confess their sin. And they seek the mercy of God in Christ. But all unbelievers are liars. Briefly look at these three categories of liars.

RELIGIOUS LIARS

There are multitudes of religious liars. Religious liars are mere carnal professors of religion. They are hypocrites, who profess godliness, but live according to the principles of evil. — *“If we say that we have*

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fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (6).

God’s people do not walk in doctrinal darkness. I do not think or suggest that believers have doctrinal infallibility. But all who are born of God are taught of God and know the truth of God.

- Christ alone is our Savior.
- Salvation is by grace, without the works of the law.

And God’s people, knowing the grace of God live in godliness. Devoted to Christ, we seek to honor Christ in all things, adorning the doctrine of God our Savior. This modern idea of carnal Christians is opposed to every principle of the Gospel.

- The grace of God changes the hearts of His people.
- The grace of God sanctifies His people.
- The grace of God that brings salvation teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world.

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True believers do not walk in darkness. That is to say, their lives are not evil. They do not live in the way of darkness. They do not live by the principles of darkness. Such an idea is an absurd lie, for what agreement is there between light and darkness?

SELF-DECEIVING LIARS

The great majority of people are self-deceiving liars. — *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (v. 8). Most people claim to be innocent of sin. They claim to be free from the principle of sin. They say they have no original sin, no sin nature. This is the reason why men despise Christ. They do not feel any need of Him. Find me a sinner and I’ll show you a believer!

BLASPHEMOUS LIARS

There are many blasphemous liars. — *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us”* (v. 10). These are those who

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excuse their faults, and so deny their guilt. Or they actually dare to claim never to have transgressed God’s law. Multitudes vainly imagine that their works are good and righteous, not the abominable filthy rags they are! Such people blaspheme God, accusing him of lying. For he declares that all have sinned and that there is *“none that doeth good, no not one!”*

CHRIST’S MERITS

In the third place — **John tenderly assures us of the merits of Christ.** All who are truly born again have seen the light of God’s perfect holiness and glory. We know that we are sinners. And we know that God must punish sin. Therefore, in verses 7 and 9, John comforts our hearts by telling us how God can be pure and holy, and, yet, put away our sin. — *“But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin...If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us*

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our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (7, 9).

In verse 7 the apostle describes the character and privileges of God’s true children. — All who are born again have had their lives greatly and radically changed. — *“We walk in the light.”* Paul says, *“Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.”*

- a. We walk in the light of God’s Word.
- b. We walk in the light of God’s grace.
- c. We walk in the light of the Gospel.

“If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” — Without question we who walk in the light of God have fellowship with one another; but John is not talking about the fellowship of men with men. He is telling us that men who, fallen, sinful, depraved men and women like you and me, as we walk in the light have fellowship with God who is Light! God and we have fellowship one with another! How?

- The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin!

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- We are made partakers of the Divine nature.
- We are made holy and pure before God by imputed righteousness in free justification and by imparted righteousness in free sanctification.

How does this walk of the believer demonstrate itself?

- Simplicity, Honesty, and Sincerity!
- Submission, Obedience, and Devotion!
- Abhorrence of Sin and Love of Holiness!
- Repentance and Faith!

We have fellowship with God who is Light and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Perhaps you ask, “Bro. Don, How can I obtain this cleansing, this forgiveness?” Look at verse 9. — *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

- There must be a confession of sin.
- God can and does forgive sin in a way that is consistent with His justice — Substitution.

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- The forgiveness is complete and instantaneous! — *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Did you catch that? — **“ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS!”**

- All without exception. Why then should we put in conditions and qualifications and exceptions?
- He is a sin pardoning God (Nehemiah 9:31).
- There is no God like him in heaven or earth who freely forgives sin (Micah 7:18).
- As we multiply sin he multiplies pardon. — *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”* (Isaiah 55:7)
- He does it freely, for his own sake (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 130:4)

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The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth (not, has cleansed or will cleanse, but *cleanseth!*) daily and constantly and continually.

(Psalms 130:1-8) “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. **2** Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. **3** If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? **4** But [there is] forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”

“**5** ¶ I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. **6** My soul [waiteth] for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: [I say, more than] they that watch for the morning. **7** Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD [there is] mercy, and with him [is] plenteous redemption. **8** And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

Amen.