

God is Light

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 July 2023

Preacher: Colin Horne

- [0 : 00] Turn in your Bibles to 1 John. Pastor Colin will continue this series in 1 John, and we will read from chapter 1, verses 5 through 10.
- 1 John, chapter 1, verses 5 through 10. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you.
- God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him, yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.
- But 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 purifies us from all sin.
- If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins, and purify us from all unrighteousness.
- [1 : 05] If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his word has no place in our lives. Let's hear the word preached. Let's hear the word preached.
- My church family. And so to be able to open the word with you, to preach it to you. I should just get going.
- The eternal Son has come. We saw that two weeks ago. In the first four verses of 1 John, the word sent from the Father, who took on flesh.
- He is the eternal life. He is the source of our eternal life. And now we have fellowship with God. We have fellowship with one another through him. We saw that two weeks ago, that John, the author of our letter, he's a witness to us.
- He's a witness of these things. And he said in those first four verses, I saw the word. I looked upon him. I touched him.
- [2 : 42] So two of our five senses, John told us about. And now he's going to introduce another one of our senses. Kids, do you know the five senses? Let's try and review those together.
- We have sight with our, say it out loud with me kids, eyes. And we speak with our mouths.
- And we touch with our hands. And we smell with our noses. And we hear with our ears.
- And tonight, John tells us, I didn't just see Jesus. I didn't just touch Jesus. But I heard him. I heard the word.
- And this is the message that he proclaims to us. God is light. And in him is no darkness at all. That's what we see here in 1 John, verse 5.
- [3 : 45] God is light. And in him is no darkness at all. Now we need to unpack this statement together. Because this is a really, really important statement in the book of 1 John.
- God is light. And in him there is no darkness at all. It's important in that it's really almost, you could say, the theme verse for the entire book. If there was one verse that we were going to point to to say this verse sets the trajectory for everything else that's to come, it's 1 John chapter 1, verse 5.

God is light. And in him is no darkness at all. So John here, he speaks to us figuratively. He is not saying, God is electromagnetic radiation that can be detected by the human eye.

He's obviously not saying that. John is using some poetic language to communicate what God is like to us, what his character is like.

So why does John describe God as light? How does the metaphor of light help us to understand what God is like?

[4 : 52] There's a few different ways, really. Let's look at each of these briefly together. Three ways the metaphor of light helps us to understand what God is like. Light reveals.

Light is good. And light gives life. So just briefly at the outset here, let's look at these three ways that we can understand the metaphor of light. Light reveals.

It makes known. Light discloses. It gives understanding. The darkness is the reverse. The darkness hides. It conceals.

Something in the darkness is hard to see, and so it's hard to understand. But when it's brought into the light, the truth is made known. It's laid bare. The truth becomes obvious and clear.

Have you ever had this experience? You're in a dark room, and you see the shape of something. You can make out its form, but you can't tell exactly what it is. And your brain convinces you that the shape is something that it's actually not.

[5 : 57] You wake up in the middle of the night, and you see this form at the foot of your bed, and you think there's a person standing in your room, only to flick on the light to see it's a mop with a shirt on top of it. The truth becomes obvious and clear when light reveals and gives understanding.

And so light and truth, they go hand in hand. We see this in the scriptures. Psalm 43, the psalmist cries out to God and says, send out your light and your truth.

Let them lead me. Let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. Send out your light and your truth. So light reveals. We also see that light is good.

It's pure. To say that God is light is to say that he is good and pure, that he is morally upright, entirely good, completely good, no hint of evil in him.

The text says no darkness at all. Emphatically, there's a double negative. There is no darkness in him, no, not at all. Darkness is threatening.

[7 : 03] No matter how old you are, how fearless you say you are, how rational that you claim to be, we all feel it. When we find ourselves in darkness, there is something that can so very quickly become unnerving about it.

And I find myself thinking, I'm not afraid. Why am I thinking that? Because I'm a little bit afraid. You go down to the basement to get something you forgot. The lights are all out.

And as you're going up the stairs, it just feels like something is following you. And you start to go a little quicker. Your pace increases. You hurry up those stairs because something is behind you.

Darkness reminds us of all that is evil. There's a reason every scary movie ever made is set in the dark at night. It would not be a scary movie if it was filmed in the parking lot right now in broad daylight.

Nothing good happens at night. Nothing good happens in the darkness. Now the reverse of all of this is also true. Light reminds us of all that is good. We see this all over the Bible.

[8 : 06] Isaiah 5.20. Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness.

God himself is called in James 1.17 the father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

And what does the father of lights do according to John 1.17 or James 1.17? He gives good gifts. Through the Bible, throughout the Bible, God and his goodness are described in the language of light and sin is described in the language of darkness.

So light reveals. Light is good. And finally, light gives life. It's the source of life. Physically, we understand this in terms of the rays of the sun.

We need the sunlight. It gives us energy. It gives us physical life. And we need the rays of God's light for spiritual life. Light and life go hand in hand throughout the scriptures.

[9 : 15] Listen to Psalm 36. For with you is the fountain of life. In your light do we see light. Light. We quoted John 1.4, our last sermon in 1 John.

How does John begin in that verse? In him was life and the life was the light of men. Finally, in John 8, Jesus himself said, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. And so, just as light is associated with spiritual life in the Bible, so too is darkness associated with spiritual death.

Hell is described by Jesus in Matthew 8 as a place of outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. So with God, there is life.

But apart from God, there is death. So God is light and in him is no darkness at all. God exposes by the light of his truth. God is good and pure.

[10 : 26] God is the fullness of life. He is perfect in all of these ways. He is the standard in all of those ways. God is light. He is not a light. He is not some light.

He is light. That is the message spoken to John and now proclaimed to us. God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

Now here's the question for us. If God is light and there is no darkness in him at all, how then should we live? If this is true and it is, how then should we live?

We see two ways this evening. Two ways that this message should impact our lives. Here's the first way. We walk in the light instead of the darkness.

We walk in the light instead of the darkness. Let's read again beginning in verse 6. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

[11 : 28] But 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. Often in the letters of the New Testament, they were written to combat some kind of heresy or some kind of false teaching of the day.

The same is true for John's letter. He is combating heresy. He is combating false teaching that primarily centered on this. False teachers were saying, God did not take on human flesh.

Jesus is not the incarnate son of God. And so that is why John started his letter so emphatically saying, I saw him.

I heard him. Jesus is God in the flesh. So these false teachers were saying, no he is not. But then they were turning and they were saying, but we have fellowship with God.

We have fellowship with God just like you. But they were rejecting a central truth of the faith that Jesus Christ had indeed come in the flesh.

[12 : 39] And so in rejecting that truth, they were also rejecting that he is the source of eternal life. They said that they had fellowship with God, but John is telling us they were walking in the darkness because they rejected what is true.

And so John makes it abundantly clear to us. Those who walk in darkness, they are lying. They don't practice the truth. They don't have fellowship with God. So John is warning us, if the message is true, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all, then we must walk in the light and not in the darkness.

We must believe that Jesus is who he said he is, that he is the eternal life, that in him alone we have eternal life.

We walk in darkness if we deny the central truths of the Christian faith. Now that's pretty overt. That's pretty obvious.

Most of us sitting here tonight are saying, yeah, definitely don't deny the central truths of the faith. And so we need to be on guard against perhaps a more subtle danger.

[13 : 51] The danger of affirming the central truths of what it means to be a Christian, but then living as though we are not a Christian. We live as though we still love our sin, though we say, I believe, though we say, God has saved me in his grace.

We then live opposite of that. We walk, we talk the talk, but we fail to walk the walk. So here's what John is saying to us. Our lives should be filled with integrity.

What we say we believe, we also live it out. I hear stories far too frequently of Christians with influence, pastors, authors, teachers, speakers.

They're well-known, they're respected, they're loved, they're followed, and they say the right things. They teach biblical truth, they teach orthodox Christian doctrine, but then sinful lifestyles are discovered.

Their lives are exposed, and they've been walking in the darkness. All the while they have said, I have fellowship with God, and yet they lied. They were found out, and we see their downfall.

[15 : 05] We hear these stories and we're grieved by them, sin and its effects, the shame and the dishonor that's brought to the name of Christ, but we need to be careful.

What makes these people different from us? Is it because we're walking in the light, or is it because our lives are just not as public as theirs?

If your life was put on display, what would people say? We're tempted to say that we have fellowship with God, especially in the life of the church.

We're tempted to talk one way, to say the right things, to affirm the truth, but to still live in the darkness, concealing the truth about how we're living, following after our old sinful patterns of life.

So are you walking in the light, or are you walking in the darkness? God is light. He has called us, 1 Peter 2 says, out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[16 : 09] He is in the light, and we are to walk in that light. The God who exposes everything by the truth, the God who is righteous and pure and good, the God who gives life, has saved us, so that we might live as imitators of him.

So are you a Christian? Is your confession, Christ died for my sins and was raised? Then live like it, publicly, privately, with everyone, with no one.

John calls us to integrity. Walk in the light as God is in the light. And as motivation, as motivation to walk in the light, John puts forward our relationship to one another.

Your fellowship to the body, he says, it's hindered if you're not walking in the light. Your sin necessarily gets in the way. Now you might not outright sin against a brother or sister, but your ability to love other believers, to encourage other believers, it's hindered if you're walking in the dark.

You're not sharing in the same joys. You're not sharing in the same delights as your brothers and sisters. You're not sharing the same hopes and clinging to the same promises. And slowly but surely gathering with the body becomes a cold duty.

[17 : 31] It becomes a front of sorts that we're just putting up to maintain. And instead of this sweet relief of gathering together from the the hardship of living in the world, we're no longer wanting to.

We're no longer thinking to pray for our brothers or sisters. We're no longer desiring to share how they can pray for us and our conversations are becoming less and less about the things of the Lord.

And none of that should be surprising if you're walking in darkness and not the light. Your fellowship will be hindered. And so if God is light, we ought to walk in the light as He is in the light for the sake of our fellowship with one another.

That's one motivation to walk in the light. Here's another from verse 7. Christ's blood, His blood, cleanses us. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us in this ongoing growth in godliness kind of way.

It's a progressive work in our hearts. As we walk in the light, we are continually being cleansed of our sins. But if we're not walking in the light, if our sins are not being dealt with, then that hinders our relationship to the Lord and to one another.

[18 : 52] And we see that unpacked more fully in verse 8. And we see the second way that the message changes how we live. Let's read verses 8 through 10. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

So here's the message that's been given to us. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. And we've seen the first way that this changes how we live.

We walk in the light instead of the darkness. That's pretty broad, pretty general. Now we see the second way the message changes how we live and it's much more specific.

We confess our sins instead of saying we have none. We confess our sins instead of saying we have none. This second way that the message changes how we live, it is almost an outworking of the first.

[20 : 00] Because God is light and in Him is no darkness at all, we walk in the light. What does it look like to walk in the light? It looks like this. We confess our sins instead of saying we have none.

Now the Bible teaches much about sin. But in many professing Christian circles today, sin is almost a dirty word.

It's avoided. It's subtly left out of preaching and teaching. More and more it seems like we as the church want to avoid talking about sin directly.

But the Bible talks about sin very directly. The Bible says we're sinners. The Bible says that we are sinners by nature. The Bible says that we are sinners by choice.

We come into this world with a sin nature. Our hearts, they are not neutral. They aren't blank slates. The Bible says that when the first man, Adam, sinned, all sinned.

[21 : 03] Romans 5, 12. Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned.

All sinned. When Adam sinned, we fell into sin. We all were involved in Adam's sin. We inherited a sin nature from our forefather, Adam. It's in our spiritual DNA.

That's why Paul can say in 1 Corinthians 15, 22, for as in Adam all die. Death is a result of sin. And so, we all died spiritually because we all are sinners by nature.

And so, because we are sinners by nature, it naturally follows that we are sinners by choice. From birth, we are acting out of the desires of our heart with our thoughts and our words and our actions.

sins. We come out of the womb sinful by nature and so we act according to our nature. We sin. And so, it shouldn't shock us in ourselves. It shouldn't shock us in others.

[22 : 09] Now, here's the good news of the gospel. Jesus Christ died on the cross for sinners like us. He died that we might be forgiven. And for all who put their faith in Christ, there is full forgiveness.

The price has been completely paid. The record of our debt against us paid in full. So, when God sees us, when he looks upon us, he sees us as righteous and holy and unblemished.

He sees us as he sees his son without fault, sinless. So, that being said, why is John exhorting us to say we cannot say we have no sin?

If the Father looks on us and says sinless, why is John telling us don't say you're without sin? We have to unpack that.

Well, God already sees us as sinless even while we are not yet actually truly sinless. He has already declared us righteous even while we are still yet so very unrighteous.

[23 : 19] Our salvation, it can be understood in three ways. we have been saved. We are being saved. And one day we will be saved. So, we have been saved is our justification.

We are being saved is our sanctification. We will be saved, our glorification. We are, we have been saved.

God has justified us. That happened if you were a Christian when you were converted. When God saved you in his grace on that day, God declared you righteous.

And yet, the Bible teaches that God is still saving us. That he is making us more and more actually really righteous. He's declared us righteous even though we are far from righteous.

But he's doing a good work in us to make us as he has declared. And so, God sees us as sinless even while we are not yet totally sinless. He sees us as he sees Christ even though we are not as Christ is yet.

[24 : 30] But one day we will be. And we'll see that in 1 John chapter 3. We've been cleansed of our sins in God's eyes and yet we are still very much needing his cleansing every day because we have sin.

Remaining sin that we must daily be cleansed of. Now, it's tempting. It's tempting, isn't it, to say we have no sin.

Now, maybe we don't actually do that. We don't actually out loud say, I have no sin. But it's tempting to live like it. There's probably lots of reasons that we could come up with for why we do this, for why we downplay the reality of sin in our lives.

Here's three. Reason number one that we downplay sin, spiritual laziness. We're spiritually lazy when we don't really pay attention to ourselves when we sin.

We don't stop and consider our ways if we want to go back to Haggai chapter one. So we move pretty quickly from a moment in which we sin to living like everything is fine.

[25 : 42] for example, you get upset with someone close to you, your mom or your dad, your brother or sister, your husband or wife, and angry words are spoken, words that you intended to inflict pain on the other person and you storm out of the room.

Then 10 to 15 minutes later, you come back into the room and you ask in the most chipper, cheery voice, so what's for dinner? That's me saying, I have no sin.

I'm not going to deal with it. Here's another reason that we downplay sin, pride. Our pride. We compare ourselves to others and we think, compared to that person, I'm pretty good.

Now, I'm a sinner. I know that I don't measure up to God, but I measure up to God better than that person. I'm not quite the sinner that person is.

I'm a pretty good person compared to them. That's saying, I have no sin. Here's a third reason that we're tempted to live as though we have no sin.

[26 : 50] Vainglory. Vainglory. So, pride says, I believe that I am worthy of praise. So, with pride, I have deceived myself into believing I'm something that I'm not.

Vainglory says, I know that I'm not worthy of praise, but I want others to think that I am. I haven't deceived myself into believing that I'm worthy of praise, but I want to deceive others.

I want others to think highly of me. I want others to esteem me, to praise me, to imitate me, and so I live as though I have no sin. I am slow to acknowledge my sin, particularly sin that no one else sees.

Envy, greed, lust, bitterness, sins that lie in the heart, but we have skillfully concealed. We don't acknowledge those sins.

We live as though we have no sin because our reputation is on the line. We want to be known for our godliness. All kinds of reasons that we might be tempted to say, I have no sin.

[28 : 02] But in the end, we're deceiving ourselves. John tells us in verse 8 that we might feel good. We might have a false sense of satisfaction. We might have a false sense of superiority, a false sense of self-worth.

We might think we're a pretty good person, but we are self-deceived. We are lying to ourselves. And then he takes it a step further in verse 10.

And John tells us there, we're calling God a liar. liar. If we say that we have no sin, if we say we have not sinned, then we're lying to ourselves, and we're calling God a liar.

Can we just stop for a moment and consider that together? Can you imagine yourself standing before God? Psalm 96 6 says, splendor and majesty are before him.

Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Psalm 93 4 says, mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea. In Exodus, God says, man shall not see me and live.

[29 : 15] You stand before him in his presence, and you say, liar. You are a liar.

And you think, I would never do that. And yet, if we say we have no sin, we call God a liar. Because God says in his word, we have sin, and we have sinned.

We have sinned by nature, we have sinned by choice. So instead of saying we have no sin, let's confess our sins.

Because confession rests on our understanding that we do have sin. sin. We can't confess sin that we don't think we have. So confession is an acknowledgement.

I have sin, and I must bring it into the light. It needs to be exposed. I'm not going to keep it hidden in the darkness. I'm not going to ignore it or treat it like it's no big deal.

[30 : 15] I'm going to bring my sin into the light through confession. So when John says walk in the light, he calls us not just to avoid the darkness of sin, but when we do enter the darkness, which means that we better be giving careful thought to our ways.

We have to be mindful of ourselves, watching ourselves, considering our thoughts and our attitudes and our actions and our words, and then recognizing our sin.

And when we do, we confess it. We're open and honest about it. Saying that we have sin is a really practical, tangible way to live in the light.

We don't ignore it. We say it's true. I have sin. And then we act. We do what God's word tells us to do. We confess our sin.

We acknowledge our sin before the Lord. We don't just admit it to ourselves. That's different. I can be pretty good at that. I sinned again. Oh, I did that again.

[31 : 21] I had that attitude. I treated that person that way. I did it again. That's acknowledging it to ourselves. That's not confessing it to God. We bring it before the Lord in humility with a contrite, repentant heart.

We don't just give lip service and move on. We remember who we are confessing to, a holy, righteous God. God. We don't treat him flippantly, so we don't treat our confession of sin flippantly.

We don't come to our God irreverently, but we also don't come to our God in despair. Because every single time we come to confess with sincere, repentant hearts, every single time, we are confident, we are sure, he is faithful and just to forgive.

meaning he will always forgive. Because our sins have been paid for by the blood of his son. It would be unjust of God to not forgive.

To hold our sins against us when our sins have been paid for, that would be unjust. And so we can be sure God is faithful. He is faithful to his promise to forgive every single time, without fail.

[32 : 43] sin. So there's a joy here. Not in sinning against God, but in confession. We rejoice in our faithful and just God who forgives us because of his righteous character, who forgives us and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

So the righteous one forgives the unrighteous time and time again. We acknowledge our sin before the Lord. So we do what David did in Psalm 51.

We plead for mercy and we appeal to God's character. David said, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your abundant steadfast love.

According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. And then David says this in verse 2, Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

Strikingly similar to 1 John 1 9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[33 : 48] So David confessed. He looked to the character of God and he knew that he needed to be cleansed of all his sins. What does 1 John teach us? We confess, we look to the character of God, and we are sure that we are cleansed of all of our sins.

Just like verse 7. This daily ongoing need for cleansing by the blood of Jesus. And the means that God uses for that? A daily ongoing confession of and repentance from sins by us.

So in the time that remains, let's think practically. Just a couple encouragements to give. Here's the first encouragement.

Confess your sins to the Lord quickly. And I don't mean say the words really quickly. because I can be guilty of that. I say it quickly to get it over with. No, I mean that we should be quick to confess when we see our sin.

We shouldn't put it off. David said in Psalm 32, for when I kept silent, in other words, when I put it off, when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

[35 : 02] For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. So David put off confession, and God's gracious hand of discipline was upon him.

He made it painful for David to keep silent. So let's be quick to see our sin. Let's be quick to confess our sin, and let's rejoice in the forgiveness of God. Here's a second encouragement.

We should also make a habit to confess our sins to one another in addition to God. Now I think that the confession John writes about here is primarily about confession to God, but elsewhere in the Bible we read of confessing to one another.

James 5, 17 calls us to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another. So we should especially confess to one another as we sin against each other, for sure.

If I sin against a brother or a sister, I should confess, and I should ask for forgiveness. But we should also confess to one another as a part of living in fellowship with one another.

[36 : 09] We share ourselves with one another. In wise, careful ways, we open ourselves up to one another. You can pray for me better.

I can pray for you better when we know each other's struggles with sin. So it may not be a particular sin in a moment of time that we confess, but it may be a I have seen this pattern of sin in my heart and I'm sharing it with you because I want my brother to know so he can pray for me, so he can encourage me, so he can help me to fight that sin.

So it might be a confession of sin in conversation after the service, might be a text during the week, might be a time set aside to meet together for encouragement and prayer, but however we go about it, it is good for us to confess to one another, to follow our confession to God, because I think we can all say from experience, it is hard to confess to others.

We can almost minimize our sin to the Lord by not confessing to others. So God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

If this is the message, how then should we live? Two ways given to us in this text this evening, walk in the light instead of the darkness, confess our sins instead of saying we have none.

[37 : 31] This is how we live today and tomorrow and the next day. And one day, one day, God says in his word that he will come to dwell with us in the new heavens and the new earth.

And in that place, Revelation 21 says, there will be no night there. That's because Revelation also says 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 lamp.

No more darkness, no more night because God will be our light and by his light we will live with him forever. Let's pray together.

Father God, we do give you thanks that you have spoken to us in your word, that you have given us your message, that the word indeed became man, took on flesh, dwelt among us, and that you teach us now by your word that you are light and in you is no darkness at all.

We pray, Lord, that you would help us by the strength that only your spirit can give to walk in the light as you are in the light. Father, we recognize that that that command to do it in our own strength, we would fail every single time.

[39 : 05] And so, Father, we plead with you, give us the strength that we need. Give us the strength that we need to walk in the light. Give us the strength that we need to indeed confess our sins to you, to not ignore our sin, to not live as though we have no sin, but to confess it and to enjoy fellowship with you.

Father, we are a needy people. We need your spirit to be at work in our hearts. Help us, we pray, this week as we go about our lives to be quick to see our sin, quick to acknowledge it and confess it to you, quick to seek your forgiveness, and then quick to ask for help from our brothers and sisters.

Help us to live indeed in fellowship with one another. We thank you that your spirit binds us together, your spirit gives us unity. We pray, Lord, that you would help us to live it out to your glory.

We pray all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen. As our closing song together, we'll sing in Christ alone, indeed remembering our Savior who went to the cross, that we might be forgiven our sins, that we might be cleansed of our sins and made right with God.

So let's sing of his great worth together in singing in Christ alone. Let's stand as we sing. He who is the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal dominion.

[40 : 45] Amen.