

## ***'Living in the Light'***

A teaching series in 1 John by Rev. Robert Griffith

### ***Part 3: Walking in the Light***

*"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 and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out 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." ( 1 John 1:5-7 )*

Are you afraid of the dark? Many people are. Children are especially fearful of the darkness. I remember being afraid of the dark as a child. I was born on a small farm at a place called Forest Reefs, just outside Orange in Central Western NSW. There are no street lights on a farm and so when it was a cloudy night, there was no light from the moon or stars. So I remember many times waking up after my parents had gone to bed and opening my eyes to nothing – absolutely nothing - no light source at all. Whether my eyes were open or closed, I saw the same thing: complete darkness. I confess that some of those nights were terrifying – especially if it was windy and there were noises outside I could not identify. This doesn't only impact young children – adults can be afraid too.

Are you afraid of the dark? I remember reading an interview with Stephen King, the best selling author of many tales of horror. In the interview he talked about his daily writing routine. He said that he only writes in the morning. When he was asked whether he ever wrote at night, he replied, "*Are you kidding? Not with the stuff I write. I would never get to sleep!*" Apparently, even Stephen King knows the power of the darkness.

We see losing that fear of the dark as a good thing. We see it as part of becoming a mature adult. But is it? I suppose that losing an unhealthy fear is always a good thing. But, at the same time, we should beware lest we lose sight of the effects of darkness. Those effects are very real indeed. Darkness is nothing to be trifled with, spiritually speaking.

Darkness, understood biblically, is where the hidden things of evil have freedom to thrive. Darkness is the enemy of the light. Darkness is the strategy of Satan to ensnare the unsuspecting. It is easy to underestimate the power of darkness. It's easy to make accommodations for darkness. It's easy to dabble in and stumble into darkness. You see, as the light dims, our eyes slowly adjust. As Christians, we need to do periodic evaluations of our own lives to make sure that the level of light stays bright.

Have you taken a good look at your life lately? Are you intentionally walking in the light? John gives us a wake-up call in this passage. He gives us a challenge to turn on the light and take a good look at ourselves in the clarity of that light. Let's look at the powerful word this passage has for us today.

### **God is Light**

John tells us that there is something very important we need to understand about God. As Christians, we must understand that God is light. In 1 John 1:5 we read, "*This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*" This is the very message Jesus' life revealed. But what does it mean? Perhaps it would help us to look at the nature of light. Just what is light? Well, if you turn to the dictionary, you will find quite a number of definitions.

One definition of light is that it is *"an electromagnetic radiation in the wavelength range including infrared, visible, ultraviolet, and X-rays and traveling in a vacuum with a speed of about 186,281 miles per second."* That, of course, is the definition of light stated scientifically. Actually, that was the third definition listed under light. The first was that light is *"something that makes vision possible."* In other words, light makes it possible for us to see. Light reveals. To *"bring something to light"* is to make it known. And this is more of what John is getting at here in this passage. God reveals. God exposes. God makes it possible for us to see clearly – to see things as they really are.

So how do you compare light with darkness? Again, if you look at the dictionary, you will find this definition of darkness: *"devoid or partially devoid of light – not receiving, reflecting, transmitting, or radiating light."* Simply put, darkness is the absence of light. Light and darkness are opposites.

In the Scriptures, light refers to truth, purity and holiness. Darkness refers to error, ignorance, sin and evil. So when John declares to us that *God is light; in him there is no darkness at all*, he is simply saying that God is the epitome of truth, purity and holiness and that in Him there is no error, sin and evil. This is the nature of God. This tells us something of who God is.

### **Stumbling in the Darkness**

John goes on to say that many claim to have fellowship with God, this God of light, but walk in the darkness. If you look around, you see that this is a common condition. It is everywhere in our society. People who believe that God may exist like to think that they are walking in harmony with Him. They like to think that there is no correlation between belief and behaviour. But John says that to walk in darkness while claiming to have fellowship with God is living a lie.

We read in 1 John 1:6, *"If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth."* In other words, we cannot enjoy fellowship with the God of light while we walk in darkness. Now John is writing, of course, to Christians. And I do not believe that he is simply informing them of how the world lives and views God. I also believe John is warning them of the danger of darkness for Christians as well. Even Christians buy into this dangerous philosophy that says we can avoid the light without any consequences. John is saying that we must beware of the darkness. Darkness will rob you of your intimacy and fellowship with God. You may be saved and heaven-bound because of God's grace in Christ, but you can still live in darkness and despair the rest of your days on earth, if you so choose.

In one of his books, Ray Stedman makes the point that we often only see darkness as sinning. But if we only look at darkness as sinning, we confuse cause and effect. In other words, we sin because we are walking in the darkness. We stumble and fall because we cannot see where we are going. This is the nature of darkness. Remember, darkness is the absence of light. Stedman goes on to say, *"To walk in darkness means to walk as though there were no God, for God is light. It is to be a practical atheist – not an actual one, of course. We believe there is a God, we know He is there, but we live as though He doesn't exist. We do not expose ourselves to Him. That is walking in darkness."*

So what are some of the ways people avoid the light? One way is when people distance themselves from their brothers and sisters in Christ and no longer gather together for worship, fellowship and prayer. Another similar way is to stop reading the Scriptures. The Bible is full of light, because it is full of God. When you are part of the fellowship of believers and when you read the Bible, you are exposed to the Word of God which brings light into your life. God's Word is itself light. Another way is to avoid the light is to never take a long look at yourself. We are encouraged in the Scriptures to examine ourselves, to evaluate just how we are doing.

If we really want to live in the light, regular self-evaluation is essential. How am I doing? Am I more loving? Am I easier to live with? Am I spending more time with God? Are my priorities in proper order? If we don't ask questions like these, we will never know the truth.

Another way to stumble into darkness is to compare yourself with other Christians. Another way is to blame others. Another way is to never admit that anything is wrong in your life, just keep up appearances and hope nobody sees your heart and your inner struggles. These are just some of the ways that Christians can stumble in darkness and avoid the light. How about you? Are you consciously and intentionally walking in the light?

### **Walking in the Light**

Rather than stumble around in the darkness, we should choose each day to walk in the light. There are many good reasons to do so. There are many benefits of walking in the light. In fact, walking in the light is the key to three essential needs of every person being met.

Walking in the light is the key to fellowship with God. Our text says that we cannot have fellowship with God while walking in the darkness. Now it is important to understand the difference between relationship and fellowship. The new birth brings us into relationship with God. We are brought into the family of God by the new birth and we are now His sons and daughters. This is our relationship. But relationship and fellowship are two different things. It is because of our God-given relationship that we can then be brought into a close fellowship with God.

On the other hand, it is possible to have a relationship and to fail to have a close fellowship. We see this in our human families. Even among close family members, like brothers and sisters, it is possible to have relationship without fellowship. In some families people are not even on speaking terms. Yet some family members are so close that they are almost inseparable.

Walking in the light brings us into this close fellowship with God. It brings us into a sweet communion with Him. It brings us into the place where we enjoy His abiding presence and where we are transformed by His approving love. It meets our need for living fellowship with God.

Walking in the light is also the key for fellowship with one another. Here John is talking about our fellowship with other Christians. We are brothers and sisters in Christ because of our relationship to Him as His children. Fellowship, however, requires more than relationship. Fellowship requires honesty, openness, approachability, an uncritical spirit, and vulnerability.

Walking in the light will produce those characteristics in our lives. Walking in the light will deliver us from the things that block fellowship with one another and make us people others will want to spend time with. Walking in the light will meet the need that every Christian has to have meaningful relationships with other believers.

Finally, walking in the light is the key to constant cleansing from all sin. John tells us that if we walk in the light, as he is in the light - the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. Now we need to understand this is not talking about forgiveness or our sin being atoned for in Christ. That is a done deal. Jesus died for our sins, once and for all. We are forgiven and reconciled to God because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. That is the gospel. That is the truth. However, we still sin!

Sin is still as destructive and horrible as it always was. It can destroy relationships. Ruin marriages. Blow families apart. Destroy Church fellowships. Sin is still sin and we need to call it what it is, own it, confess it, and walk away from it.

The trouble is, sin always hides in the darkness. Just as I could see absolutely nothing on those cloudy nights on that little farm all those years ago, so too, we cannot see our sin until we draw near to the light. Walking in the light exposes sin. Walking in darkness hides sin. Walking in the light helps us deal with sin. We are told that we are cleansed from all sin. Even the unknown sins are cleansed when we walk in the light. Light and darkness cannot occupy the same space – light will always dispel darkness. Holiness and perfection cannot occupy the same space as sin and imperfection. So as we walk towards the light, as we draw nearer to our holy, perfect God, His light exposes and then dispels our darkness, our win.

By walking in the light, exposing ourselves to the constant presence of the Holy Spirit, we are kept clean by the power of the blood of Jesus. This meets the deepest of all human needs – intimacy with God. Four hundred years ago, French Philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote these words, *“There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each human being which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”* That God-created desire to be in His presence, surrounded by His glory, is only met as we walk in the light. On the other side of the grave it will be instantaneous as we are fully united with God in Christ. This side of the grave, God calls us to ‘choose this day whom you will serve’ and to make deliberate, conscious choices to walk in the light and by so doing, the darkness will be pushed back more and more.

So how are you doing? Are you walking in the light? Are you intentionally avoiding darkness? Take a good look at where you really are and what you are really doing. Ask God to shed His light on your situation. Listen for Him to speak to you and then commit yourself right now to do what He says. The challenge for each of us is to get out of the shadows and stay in the light. For many Christians who live a good, wholesome life and try to do the right thing, they can end up thinking this is as good as it gets and that they are walking in the light. But that is a lie. There is so much more light waiting for us. So much more purpose and meaning and victory and power and fruitfulness.

When Jesus told us to pray, *“Your kingdom, come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven ...”* He was effectively saying that we should pray and believe that the fullness of heaven can actually manifest here on earth. That the light of God which beams in that Holy City day and night will be the light of God which shines on earth and into this Church and your lives and your homes. So no, this is not as good as it gets! Your current level of experience in God is way short of what awaits you in heaven ... and what awaits you right here on earth as you choose each day to walk in the light and embrace the mission, the power and the presence of Christ in us.

So how then shall you live in the face of what God has revealed to you? Will tomorrow be any different for you now? Will you make different choices which draw you deeper and deeper into God’s presence ... further into the light of the world?

Let those who have ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to us today. Amen.