

Live in the Light

Part 1 – Walk in the Light

I John

Intro

John is likely writing this letter in or around the city of Ephesus. He, with many other believers, had fled Jerusalem shortly before Rome destroyed the city. In Ephesus and the surrounding region, John would have encountered great amounts of idolatry. Men and women who worshipped money, clothing, commerce, and lifestyle.

Unfortunately, the church has experienced a sort of exodus from the faith – where some of the believers and followers of Jesus were being swept up into this new free culture.

The essence of his letter is to remind and call these disciples back to the core of their faith, based on the teachings and life of Jesus Christ.

Throughout this letter, John carries a few main consistent themes – ones that he comes back to repeatedly.

Themes of the Letter

- 1) True Doctrine**
- 2) Obedient Living**
- 3) Loving Others**

Unfortunately, the issues that John was addressing thousands of years ago within the church have not changed much for today's believers. Our need to reaffirm and rediscover these 3 truths are just as important for our faith as it was for John's original audience.

So John, as he always does, starts at the beginning – the basis of true doctrine.

True Doctrine

1 John 1:1

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.

In the very beginning, before anything else was, God existed...and Jesus existed with Him. Not only did Jesus exist with God, but that He Himself, was God.

However, over time false teachers and civil religious leaders had begun arguing that Jesus never really existed, or at least that He was not God in the flesh, and were pulling these believers adrift. John's letter is an attempt to correct their thinking and point them back to that which gave them life!

1:2-4

the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

John had walked with Jesus, heard His teaching, saw His life, was there when He was crucified, and was an eyewitness to the fact that Jesus rose again [just like He said He would]. His desire is for these believers to know Jesus like he knew Jesus, for them to experience true community with one another, because they have true fellowship with God – through the One [Jesus Christ].

If He is not truly the Son of God, then we can go back to living according to the desires of our own hearts. But the command is to believe fully in Jesus, His teachings, His life – to keep His commands, to live as He called us to live, to believe as He taught us to believe.

Obedient Living

1:6

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

Then John turns directly toward his readers. *Look, here's the deal. I know you. And I know some of you are dabbling in the dark. You know the truth of God. You know light when you see it, and you know darkness as well. What are you doing? You have been made new in Christ. You have the light of men [Jesus] in you...and He cannot coexist with darkness and cannot be overcome by it.*

John is likely rephrasing or repeating some of the things he's heard from these believers. They were arguing, bargaining, changing the rules, moving the line. *Come on John, you know this isn't THAT bad. It's a gray area!*

1:7

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.

When we know the truth, and actually live the truth – the truth of God's Word and His principles, not our made-up version of spirituality – then we are walking in the light. We are able to walk openly and publicly, not because of our goodness, but because the blood of Jesus Christ [and His death in my place] allows us to be free from ridicule and shame, having removed our guilt and forgiven our sin.

1:8-10

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.

If we're honest, there are times we know we have walked beyond the light and into the dark. But if we will admit our fault, confess our sin, God is faithful every single time to forgive us. He has already done the work – through Jesus' sacrifice and death on our behalf – to offer us forgiveness. Not just forgive us, but to cleanse us. To remove the stain of sin. But it requires true repentance – sincere regret over the choice we made and sin we committed.

2:1

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

John has a father's heart for these believers. His desire is to help correct the false teaching they have been influenced by and teach them *true doctrine*. John's goal is for them to understand the truth and Word of God in a way that would cause them to recognize darkness, and live so in line with God that they would run from it.

But he also knows that while we are free from sin, we are still tempted by it and fall prey to it.

2:1 [cont.]

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

This is the best part. Since we have the light of the world in us, we should no longer have fellowship with darkness. However, if we do – we don't have to fear. We have someone who will go on our behalf and advocate for us.

We have someone who will plead our case. Someone who will go to God and support us. Someone who has our back. Which means we don't have to go before Him on our own, wearing our guilt and shame.

Not Just Any Advocate

And we don't have just any advocate. We have Jesus Christ, who was with God in the beginning, and who is Himself God. We have the *righteous* [perfect, holy] Jesus Christ who will stand before the Father and plead our case for us.

2:2

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

Jesus is not only our advocate – pleading the judge to look past our sin – he is also our *propitiation*.

A sacrifice that bears God's wrath and turns it to favor.
-Propitiation

God gave Jesus to the world [as a gift], so that His perfect [righteous] life might be offered as a sacrifice – effectively bearing the wrath of God toward sin for all who confess [their sin] and believe [trust in] Jesus Christ. So when Jesus advocates [goes to the Father and pleads our case] *for* us, He is actually going *as* us.

And the wrath that was due to us [because of our sin] has been changed to favor [steadfast love] because darkness has been overcome and we are now made new by the sacrifice of His Perfect Son. When the Father sees you, He sees His perfect Son.

Jesus advocates for us because His righteousness stands before God as us. He has removed our sin and given us His righteousness – which contains no darkness.

So when you and I do sin, we can confess it, because the One who advocates on your behalf has already given you His righteousness. **Your sin [darkness] cannot overcome His holiness [light].**

3:4 & 7 & 9

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.

John lays down a strong call to those who are following Jesus. Because God's seed [Word & Holy Spirit] are in you – which are changing you, you cannot see or continue in sin as though it were a normal course of life. Habitually living in a pattern of sin is not possible any longer.

Our lives reveal the seed that is planted.

3:10

By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

A tree is known simply by its fruit. This is the true test of what people believe – not matter what they say.

Loving Others

2:9-11

Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

This is the other evidence of our faith – our love for one another. We cannot hate our brother/sister and say we are in the light. We cannot hate another [person] and claim to have been forgiven and changed.

3:11 & 16

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

Our sacrifice is made possible because of Jesus' sacrifice. He has both given us an example to follow, but is also the power in which we are able to love. Without His sacrifice giving us new life [new heart and new desires] we would not be able to lay our lives down for others.

We are now a people who lay down our lives [give up our time, walk through difficult spaces, sacrifice our comforts] so that we might be part of helping people find life.

[Orphan Sunday video]

We are a people who lay down our lives so that others might find it.

3:17-18

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

To not help someone in need reveals that our love for what the world offers is greater than our love for our brother. If that is true of us [as the church] then why do we exist? We cannot be a people who speak about the love of God and our love for others, yet do nothing to display true love to our brothers.

For too long, the church just mouths *man, I'll pray for you* and then do nothing to actually help someone in need. We want to attend worship services and great events, but run from opportunities to wade deep into someone else's life. It's easier to show up on your timeframe with your preconceived idea of what church is supposed to be about – what you and I can get out of it, our agenda. It's a much different thing [a much more sacrificial thing – biblical thing – Jesus thing] to come into a community of people with eyes, hands, and hearts open wide to come alongside someone else's mess and say *I'm here with you and for you – no matter what.*

This is what defines the people of God!

[Serve 1 video]

One of the greatest ways that you and I can grow, help other people grow, and reach those in our neighborhoods – is by being deeply involved in other people’s lives and reaching your local community. Not only are we called to love those within the faith [already brothers and sisters], but those in our community who are *not yet* believers and followers of God.

4:19

We love because he first loved us.

He loved us first! We don't have to do anything to earn it. And this love gives us such confidence that it allows us to love others the same way He has loved us.