

1John 1:1~10

John opens this letter with an amazing declaration... Most of us have been in church so long, that statements like this, no longer astound us, but they should. For what John declares here is the single most important, and the greatest event that has ever transpired in the history of this world... *“God taking on human form, and walking among men”*...

¹*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;* ²*(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)*

You’ve probably already figured out “Who” John is referring to here, right? He’s talking about Jesus, right? All these references are to the person of Christ... ¹*That which was from the beginning... the Word of life...* ²*For the life was manifested...* (and then my favorite), *“eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us”*. Each one of those descriptions, is that of Jesus Christ! In short, John is saying that the “Very Life of God” took on human form in the person of Jesus Christ, and we have seen God! That’s what “eternal life” refers too. Many think of “eternal life” in terms of “longevity,” in the sense of “never-ending.” Though it does carry the meaning of “never ending,” that’s not what eternal life is. The eternal life that John is referring to here is the “Very life of God!” The life we have is temporal, it’s the life of this world, the life of man. That’s why Jesus said we need to be born again, before a man can enter the kingdom of God, he must have eternal life, the life that comes from God. Here John says, that *“that which was from the beginning, the word of life, eternal life...the “very Life of God”...took on human flesh, and I walked with Him! I have walked with God Himself,”* John says. I’ve heard Him speak in an audible voice. I saw Him walk to and fro, I’ve seen Him do amazing things. And now I’m writing to you, to tell you what I’ve learned from Him, so that you can know the truth about God, and so that you too can have fellowship with Him as well...

³*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* ⁴*And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

That word “fellowship” is the Greek word “koy-nohn-ee-ah”, which carries the meaning of partnership, or companionship. It speaks of having a close, personal relationship with someone, in terms of knowing that person intimately. Here John is writing declaring that he has this intimate fellowship with God, and that as a result, he has experienced this immense joy! And now he’s writing so that we too might have this same fellowship with God as well, and experience that same joy! This “joy” that John is talking about here, is not some fleeting, superficial, emotional, temporal kind of joy that we experience in this world from time to time. But rather, the kind of joy that John is talking about here is one of substance, one that is lasting; it is true joy in the inner soul of a man.

So how is your “Joy?” Is it full? If you remember, last week I asked you to contemplate that question all this past week. A better question might be, “How’s your relationship with God?” Because that’s ultimately what determines how your joy is. The joy that John is speaking of here can’t be found in anything other than through an intimate, personal walk with God. God has put a burden on my heart, to help others have this joy that comes from having fellowship with God. I’m convinced there’s people all over the country this morning, who are “faithful to attend church every Sunday,” they try to “live right,” and do what’s right...but there’s no joy. Well, the “joy” that John is talking about here, doesn’t come from doing what’s right, or merely attending church. The joy that John is speaking of here only comes from having an intimate, personal fellowship with the living God! It is the joy of the Lord that comes from walking with Him... Psalmist said, *“In thy presence is the fullness of Joy.”*

John’s Big Revelation... ⁵*This then is the message*...John says there in verse 5. Don’t miss this, If you understand just what John is declaring here, you’ll realize that this becomes one of the greatest truths about God found in all of scripture. This is John’s big revelation! *“that which was from the beginning, the*

word of life, eternal life...the “very Life of God” took on human form in the person of Jesus Christ, John says, we have seen Him, we have touched Him, we have walked with Him and communed with Him...and here’s what we learned about God through Him...that **God is Light, and in Him, there is no darkness at all**... That is John’s assessment of God, as to what He is like, and who He is, based on what he witnessed in the life of Jesus Christ. From our time of “Walking with Christ,” ⁵*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you...God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all*...

He sums God up in one word...“**Light**”. The fact he goes on to say, “*an in Him is no darkness at all*,” is merely to stress the fact, that He is “**Pure Light**.” Now here’s where this passage gets a little tricky, because the issue now becomes, what does John mean by *light*? By declaring that *God is Light*...what was John saying about God? What does it mean, that God is Light? It is vital that we understand this, because it is only when we understand what this Light is, that we truly understand what God is like!

Now, we could take a few moments here, to go around the room, and ask each person to give their opinion of what they think John means by Light. But to do that would be to error greatly, because by doing so, there’d be almost a certain chance, that we’d end up with the wrong perception as to what God is like. We all may have our own idea as to what “*Light*” signifies, but unless we correctly interpret what John meant, than all we have is our own opinions, and if they’re not what John was thinking, then it would do more harm than good, because if it’s not what John was meant, then we’d end up that with a wrong perception of God.

So the question becomes, how do we do this? How do we know what John means by “*Light*”? Well, the first thing is to not allow ourselves to interject our own opinions and speculations. Then secondly, look only to the scriptures for answers. We must seek for clues and truths here in John’s letter, as to what he was referring to when he declares that God is Light. And as we shall see, as you consider what John goes on to say throughout this letter, we can better conclude what he means by “*Light*”.

Let me give you just a few examples of what I’m talking about...(we’ll look more at these later in our study)

(2:3~4) We learn that “*Light is a reference to Obedience*”...

(2:8~11) We learn that “*Light is a reference to loving our fellow man...brother*”

(2:15~17) We learn that “*Light is love for the Father and His will...and not this WORLD*...”

(3:7~8) We learn that “*Light is a reference to walking in righteousness...faithfulness to God*.”

(3:14~15) We learn that “*Light is a reference to loving our brother*”...

(4:7~8) As we learnt last week...that “*Walking in the light is a reference to walking in LOVE*”...

That’s a few of the things that John speaks to here, concerning what he means by “*Light*”. People who know God, and have fellowship with God, walk in the light, as He is in the light. They walk in these ways John says. If they don’t, then they walk in darkness, and manifest they don’t know Him. Thus the analogy of “**light and darkness**” here that he opens up his letter with. ⁵*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.* ⁶*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness*, (which would be contrary to these ways, right?)...then *we lie, and do not the truth*...John says. ⁷**But**...*if we walk in the light*, (by walking in the ways we just described)...then it manifests that *we walk in the light, as he is in the light, and it manifests that we do have fellowship with God*...

Simple enough, right? The point of the analogy of “*Light and Darkness*” is merely to say that the life we live will ever validate our claims of knowing God, by walking in a way that is consistent with one who knows Him, or it will serve as evidence against us, manifesting we don’t know Him as we claim. It’s kind of like the “*Good and Bad tree analogy*” Jesus taught. Whereas He said “*you’ll know the tree by the fruit it bears*.” His point was the same as John’s here, there are some who claim they know God, but their lives tell a different story. Point being, we must be aware of this, so we don’t following the wrong ones...

So, the point of all this is, we must be careful not to jump to conclusions as to what “*We think*” it means, and allow the scripture to interpret it for us.

Having said that, we'll begin this morning, in verses 6~10, by understanding what he doesn't mean by this "Light."

⁵This 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. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷But 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 cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Given what John says here, we can understand what he **doesn't mean**, by "Light." Now, I don't know about you, but when I first read that statement, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all," one of my first thoughts was, that it was a reference to *God being Holy, in terms of being without sin.* "God is Holy, and in Him there is no sin at all." Though that is true, and certainly can be said of God, I don't believe that's what John was referring to here by saying "God is light". The reason I say that is, because if it is, then that means that we'd have to be holy, and without sin, right? If that indeed was what John was saying when he said, "God is light," that God is **HOLY**, and in him is no **SIN** at all, then that would mean that we'd have to be holy and without sin as well, according to the analogy John uses. And to even suggest that "We are holy, and in us there is no sin at all" would be foolish. So given that, it only stands to reason, that this was not what John meant by God being light.

This seems to be further supported by what John goes on to say here, concerning our sin. Read verses 7~10 again with me, and notice how many times John mentions "**our sin**." ⁷But 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 cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

The message here is clear, we are anything but holy, we are sinners! Six times in those four verses, John makes reference to "Our **Sin**." The emphasis is clearly on that of our sinful condition, point is, we are sinners. But, according to John, that doesn't keep us from having fellowship with God. Matter of fact, according to what John says here, it's by our walking with God, and having fellowship with Him, that we are cleansed of our sin. Look again what John says there in verse 7. ⁷But 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 cleanses us from all sin.

The point John is making here is, that even though we are sinners, we can walk with God! In spite of my sinful condition, I can draw nigh unto God, and have intimate fellowship with Him! That's why this is such good news...God receives sinners!

Am I advocating, that it doesn't matter how a man lives, that a man can live in sin, and yet be ok with God? As Paul would say, "God forbid!" Anyone who thinks that is true, reveals that haven't a clue what the gospel teaches, and bears witness to the fact that their heart has never been changed! In no way does the scripture teach that...but rather, what John is saying here is that "In Christ," even though we are sinners, we can still walk with a Holy God. Matter of fact, if I understand this right, what John says here in verses 8-9, it is the recognition of our sinfulness, and our confession of our sin, that enables us to have this fellowship with God. Read with me what he says here...

⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

In essence John is saying, "God doesn't walk with the righteous...only with sinners." Reason being, there are no "righteous men." Now, some think so, some see themselves as righteous. But according to what John says here, all that means is they've deceived themselves, and reveals that they are completely ignorant of the truth of God. Whereas John says, "if we confess our sins, **if we acknowledge our sins**... God is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness..."

The ironic part to me here is, that it is those who are aware of their sinful condition, that are the ones who are able to “*walk in the light*,” and to “*walk with God*.” I want you to listen closely to what I’m saying... Most people have the mindset, “*I’m not good enough to walk with God*,” or “*God would not walk with me...I’ve got too much wrong with me*.” Hear what I’m saying, this will help you. Most people think, that *it’s only those who are right with God, only those who have it all together, only the righteous ones...that have close, intimate fellowship with God*. But listen to me, it’s not. For the simple fact, there are no such people. We’re all sinners, we all have problems. If you waited till you got everything right, if you waited till you get your life cleaned up, you’d never walk with God. According to John, the “*cleaning of our lives*” is His work. ⁹*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. Beloved, it is God that must do the cleansing...if we are to be truly clean. We can’t cleanse ourselves. Those who try to, and think they are clean by the way they live to God’s law, are just fooling themselves, as John says here. They’ve just clothed themselves in the garments of religion. They may look righteous by their outward obedience to God’s law, but underneath the superficial exterior, remains an unchanged man! He’s every bit as much a sinner as he always was, it’s just now he’s deceived himself into thinking that he’s ok, and that he’s a righteous man, based on his obedience to God’s law. The law can’t change a man, only God can change a man. Beloved, it’s only when we come to God, humbled by our sin, confessing our sin to God, that we are truly cleansed and changed.

I’m convinced, that when John speaks of “*Walking in the light, as He is in the light*,” what he’s saying is, that *we must walk openly and honestly before God*. Not trying to cover anything, not trying to be something we’re not. But rather, just coming before God as we are, having our sins exposed by His righteousness...and then confessing that sin, and repenting of that sin. To me, that’s what the Christian life is all about. I don’t know about you, but I’ve been walking with Christ now close to 23 years, and I still haven’t arrived. He still points out things in my life that aren’t right, and calls me to repentance.

In closing here, look at John’s last statement here...very interesting...

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

Think about what John is saying here... Anyone who claims they have not sinned, is calling God a liar! Reason being, the testimony of God’s word is, that man is fallen, that all men are sinners! And any man who argues differently, is challenging the validity of God’s word as being true, and therefore calling God a liar.

What John is saying here, is best understood in light of the ones that John was referring to here, by these statements. There’s no question in my mind, that when John makes these statements, he’s got the Scribes and Pharisees in view here, the religious leaders of the day. If you know anything about these men, given what we’re told throughout the N.T., these men considered themselves to be these “righteous” men of God, who were living in a way that was pleasing to God. Which by all “*outward accounts*,” they were. Given their meticulous and diligent observance of God’s law, given their zeal to perform every command, down to the smallest jot and tittle, and given their emphatic stand against anything the word of God opposed, the result was a “*form of righteousness*.” It was these men who defined, to whom the people of John’s day looked too, for the knowledge and truth of God. But as John declares here, such men are ignorant to the truth of God, being blind to their own sinfulness. These men prided themselves as being these righteous, obedient holy men of God, while they sneered down their noses at sinners, who weren’t as holy as them. Which confirmed yet again, their false claims of knowing God, for God loves sinners!

The bottom line is, John had lived around these men all his life, he’d been exposed to the religious system of the day. But when he met Jesus, and walked with Him for those 3 years, his eyes was opened to the truth about God, and what He is truly like! John saw, He’s nothing like these men “*portray Him to be*.” Unlike these men, who detested sinners and wanted nothing to do with them...God loves sinners, and desires to walk with them and show mercy to them.

So in closing, what does it mean, “...to walk in the light, as He is in the light?” Well, understand that more and more, as we go through this letter. But for this morning, we’ve learnt what it doesn’t mean. It doesn’t mean to walk in sinless perfection, because if it did, no one would walk with God. For we are all sinners, descendants of Adam and Eve, our earthly mother and father. But according to what John says here, that doesn’t keep us from “walking with God.” Matter of fact, understood, it is this very understanding, of our sinful condition, that in part defines what it means to “walk in the light,” because to realize our sinful condition, reveals that our eyes have been opened to the truth, that we are not “blind.” The great truth here is, that “In Christ,” we can walk with God, for God receives sinners.