

**1st John 1: 5-7; “God is Pure and Perfect Light”, Sermon # 2 in a series entitled –
“Behold What Manner of Love”, A Communion Sermon Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on October 2nd, 2016,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

John has begun telling his readers about eternal life; that life which is found in the Word of Life who is Jesus Christ our Lord. He has written this letter in order that those who read it would be able to have the assurance that they know God and that they have eternal life. He began by saying that this Christ, who is eternal life, was manifested to them, the apostles. And further, that they had positively identified Him as both God and man; real flesh and blood humanity, and truly Divine as well. It was He Who had taught them the truth of the meaning of life, and He had lived it out before them. They had seen Him and they had touched Him after His resurrection. And they knew that everything that He had given to them of Himself and His teaching had real spiritual substance. It was not a matter of speculation. He was not a spirit being bringing a philosophic teaching. He had brought them into fellowship with Himself as the God-Man. He had really granted to them a participation in divine things. He had brought them into the greatness of the reality of fellowship with the Father as well as with Himself. All of this fellowship with God had become so real to the apostles that they had come to have a fullness of joy in this great salvation. And they desired that every reader of this book would have this same assurance as well. So now John begins to tell us what they had been told by the Lord Jesus, as to the nature of God Himself. It was a message of their declared fellowship with the Father and the Son. And so, this afternoon we want to think about this fellowship more closely before we partake of the Lord’s Supper.

1st of all – It is a fellowship of Light with no darkness at all.

Once again, verse 5 says: “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” The truth of what God is, is essential to eternal life. There are, sad to say, many enemies of truth. John was writing this little epistle, in part, because of the Gnostic heresy of his day. The Gnostic heresy of that day came from men who “tried to blend the philosophy of the East, or Greece, with the doctrines of the gospel.” “They boasted of having a deeper knowledge of the Scripture and theology than others.” John Newton Brown’s theological dictionary of the Bible says, “Being a Gnostic therefore, was not so properly a distinct sect as a generic term, comprehending all who, forsaking the simplicity of the gospel, pretended to be wise above what is written, to explain the New Testament by the dogmas of the philosophers, and to derive from the sacred writings that which was never contained in them.” It is not necessary that we go through all the teachings of the Gnostic heresy but we can be sure that this epistle was written to refute many of them.

John begins where we all should begin; with God Himself. He says in verse 5, “This is the message which we have heard from Him (that is from Jesus Christ) and declare to you, that God is light...” Now you can see from this that John wants to declare what had become evident and true to Him and the other apostles, about God. They had received this truth by revelation; the revelation of being with Jesus, and being taught by Jesus. “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” This shows what He is, and what He is not in profoundly simple terms. He is, in His Essential Being, pure and perfect Light. In other words, the glory of His attributes as they exist and are displayed, can be summed up as all brilliant, all powerful, all pure, and all holy Light. God is a Spirit and He alone has immortality. “He dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see”, it says in 1st Timothy 6: 16. Why “unapproachable light”? Because His holiness is coupled with His infinite Justice and Power in such a way that it requires that

anything mortal or sinful not approach Him except upon His terms. He is separate and He is altogether different from all that He has created, because of His holiness.

The contrast is clear in the verse that we are studying. “In Him there is no darkness at all.” I like what Albert Barnes says on this. “Light in the Scriptures is the emblem of purity, truth, knowledge, prosperity, and happiness – as darkness is the opposite.” “John here says that God is light – in the Greek: φῶς – phōs – not the light, or a light, but light itself.” “That is, He is himself all light, and is the source and fountain of light in all worlds.” “He is perfectly pure in righteousness, without any admixture of sin.” “He has all knowledge, with no admixture of ignorance on any subject.” “He is infinitely happy, with nothing to make him miserable.” “He is infinitely true, never stating or countenancing error.” “He is blessed in all his ways, never knowing the darkness of disappointment and adversity.”

The fact that God is described for us here as Light shows us something about His very nature that we ought always to remember. He is in the first and highest sense glorious, excellent, and pure in Holiness and Righteousness and Truth. These attributes in God are displayed radiating out from Him as Brilliant Pure Light. They are not to be thought of as something distinct from His Being. They are what He essentially is in His Being. We ought never to think of God without thinking of Him as Pure and Holy. He is everything Good, He is everything Giving, and everything thought of, and everything said and done by Him, is perfect and wise and right. His very nature excludes everything evil and all wrongdoing. There is no darkness at all in Him. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning,” it says in James 1: 17. This is how He should be viewed by every true believer.

To apply this to ourselves: A true believer cannot think evil of God without being in sin. He cannot attribute to God wrong-doing or unfairness or unkindness, without sinning against the One who is Perfect and Pure Light. Let us examine our hearts here and now, before we come to the Supper. Do we tolerate thoughts of the infinitely holy God that would indicate to Him that we think that He is not pure and perfect Light? It is not possible that He is a mixture of light and darkness. But we may become so confused by the darkness of our own experience of what Satan and evil men are doing, that we may fall into thinking that somehow God is not pure and perfect Light in His being. We must remember that our hearts can deceive us into thinking wrong thoughts about God. But let us hold fast to the truth that is taught to us here. Let us remember that anything of darkness proceeds from the Prince of Darkness, or from the darkness of our own sinful minds and hearts. There is no “variation or shadow of turning” with God, to think, or say, or do a sinful thing. The prophet Habakkuk says: “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.” (Habakkuk 1: 13) Neither is there any darkness in His word. Proverbs 30: 5 says: “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.” “Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and you be found a liar.” God is light and He reveals everything that is good and right and true and pure. He scatters and drives away the darkness; everything related to sin and wrong thinking. Our fellowship with Him is light, and in that fellowship there is no darkness at all.

2nd – The apostle’s message declares to us that this fellowship forbids lying about the reality of it. (verse 6)

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” It is all too easy for any person to say that he or she has fellowship with God. Many said it in that day, and many say it in our own day. But John and the other apostles are concerned to show us that what we say will be proven by where and how we walk. That is, whether we “walk in the light”, and whether “we practice the truth”. John is very firm and very stern about this point that he is making. “If we say that we have fellowship with God and yet we are walking in darkness, we are lying when we say that we have fellowship with God. To have

fellowship with God is to pursue a holy relationship with God by “practicing the truth.” We take steps of obedience in accordance with God’s commandments. That which we read in the Bible, we are to do, in order to please Him. That which was delivered to us by apostolic hands, is what was given to them by the Holy Spirit, from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. A true Christian will take definite steps to learn the truth of God’s Word; what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, what is true about ourselves, about God, and about our Lord Jesus Christ. And if we are faithful, we will keep walking in this light. We will be attempting to put into practice every command, remembering every promise, and we will be praying for the grace to continue in this narrow path which leads to everlasting life. We do not want to be found to be liars; saying that we have fellowship with God, and yet all the while secretly or openly clinging to the sinful attitudes and practices of darkness.

It is good to think of the Ten Commandments as being the rule of life for the believer in Jesus Christ. Yes, it is true that we are not saved by keeping the commandments of God. We are not under law but under grace. But we are saved unto good works, and to know what good works are, we must remember all the moral commandments of God. And so, as we come to partake of the Supper, it is good to review our life of obedience to God. Do I have other gods before God at any time in my walk with Him? Do I have idols in my heart? Do I take God’s name in vain? Do I remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy? Do I honor my father and mother? Do I commit murder by being angry with my brother when I should not be angry? Do I commit adultery by looking at someone other than my wife or husband, lustfully? Do I steal things overtly, secretly, or subtly from the company that I work for? Do I speak against others and bear false witness concerning them? Do I covet things which God has not given me, but they have been given to my neighbor or belong to him? To have real fellowship with God, we must be pursuing obedience to all of God’s moral commandments.

We either have or do not have this real fellowship with God. And this is determined by whether we are walking in the light. Part of walking in the light is to attempt to realize where we are falling short in our obedience; being able to acknowledge this, and to have dealings with our God over it in prayer and meditation upon what His will is for our lives. If we are walking in the light, we will be seeking the forgiveness and cleansing from all unrighteousness that we find in ourselves, through the blood of Jesus Christ. If you will turn to Ephesians 5: 8-14 you will see a good explanation of what I am trying to relate to you here. Paul says, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Light is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.” “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” “For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.” “But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”

You see from these verses that it is possible to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but that if you do so, you are giving the lie to your saying that you are walking in the light and having fellowship with God. It is either one or the other. And whatever is of darkness in your thoughts and actions, you must pray that God’s pure light will reveal it to you, and scatter the darkness. Once an area of darkness has been exposed by the light of Christ shining to reveal it to you in your heart and mind, if you are having fellowship with Him, it will result in your confession of whatever sins you have committed in your heart or in your actions. And you will turn from these areas of darkness; you will be confessing them as sin before the Lord. He, then, because He is faithful, will cleanse you from all sin. Are you not thankful that our Lord is faithful to do this? When you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and He will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. This is the cleansing of the conscience, and it is the cleansing also of the mind and heart from the pollution which that sin has brought to us.

3rd – The apostle John proposes to us this truth: That if we will walk in the light as Christ is in the light, we will have fellowship with one another.

Verse 7 says: “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all sin.” I have just introduced to you the idea of the thoroughness of the Lord’s cleansing of your heart when you confess your sins. Let me ask you whether you believe that it is so? For if you do, it will go a long ways to establish your fellowship with the Father and the Son. Jesus Christ, because of His sacrifice, washes you from your sins in His blood. He purges and purifies the heart of the believer from all the pollutions of sin. Let us glory in this reality today, in terms of the fellowship that we have with Him. Unless He wash you, not only in regeneration, but also in your sanctification, day by day, you have no part with Him. But He does wash you and cleanse you. And so it says in Titus 1: 15 – “To the pure, all things are pure”. Let us glory in the fact that Jesus is the friend of sinners, and He proves Himself over and over, to be faithful to all of His saints, to cleanse them from all sin. Even though the flesh, the remnants of the Old Man, are still with us, it is nevertheless true, that every confessed sinful motion and every confessed sinful act proceeding from that old nature, is cleansed. O it is such a precious truth, and it teaches us how precious our friendship and our fellowship with our Savior really are.

Let this truth motivate you to walk closely with your Lord. Remember the importance of repentance. You cannot pursue a course of sinning like you once did. All of your sins will need to be confessed and forsaken in order to have this precious fellowship with your Lord continue. Let us remember, as we are now here at the table, that our Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, is always “in the light”. Since He walked in the light and obeyed God perfectly when He was here upon the earth, He not only has something to give to you who believe in Him; that is, imputed and imparted grace to pardon and cleanse within. But He has something for you to remember about Him, in your walk with Him. And that is, that He is for you and He is with you every day in the Person and power of the Holy Spirit. He is “in the light”. The Father, having approved of all that the Lord Jesus did on your behalf, in living and dying for you, raised Jesus from the dead. And He is now seated at the right hand of the Father. He is “in the light” of the Father’s constant approval. His intercession on your behalf is perfectly effectual to keep you in His grace and in constant favor with the Father. All things have been given into Christ’s hands by His Father. And He is blessing you, dear Christian, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. So, as we partake of these elements, let us now remember that it is because of our faith in Jesus Christ, we are light in the Lord. And let this Supper strengthen you spiritually to have greater fellowship with the pure and perfect Light that God is, through Jesus Christ our Lord.