

# God is Light

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**Bible Text:** 1 John 1:5-7  
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We read God's word in the first chapter of the first epistle of John.

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 shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 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. 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, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But 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 cleanseth us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

We read the word of God this far.

Our text is taken from verses 5 through 7,

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, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But 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 cleanseth us from all sin.

Beloved saints in Jesus Christ, our text is one of a number of texts throughout Scripture that emphasize that the right way of living flows from and is founded on the right knowledge of God. A very simple and yet profound truth the apostle states in our text,

"God is light," so simple that those three words in the English language make a very simple sentence that even in the Greek language they are rather easily translated and understood, at least as regards the grammar and the vocabulary, and yet what a profound truth is set forth in those words. That accords with the style of the inspired Apostle John, simple in the grammar, profound and deep in the thought he expresses.

So in our text, God is light. Not turning it around to deify a creature and say that light is God, nor just saying that in some ways light and God have some things in common, that there is a resemblance between them, but the apostle is saying that what light as a creature is, God in a spiritual sense and to the fullest extent possible is. Light is a revelation of Jehovah and when you understand that, walk in the light and avoid darkness.

Not only is the apostle in the text making that point made in many other places that a right life of the Christian follows from the right knowledge of God, but he is also though not explicitly in our text but more explicitly in the context, indicating that he's dealing with a wrong view of God that's prevalent in his day and he means to set forth the true God and the right knowledge of that true God for the people of God. He opposes a heresy called Gnosticism. Gnosticism taught among other things, that the spirit, the soul of man is good and that all spirit is good, but that matter or created physical material things are bad, and that your and my greatest problem is not sin but is that our soul, a good soul, is trapped in a bad body and somehow we need to escape that body and the way to do it is by having a special knowledge. The word Gnosticism is the Greek word for knowledge.

So the apostle has begun the chapter and the epistle by presenting Jesus Christ in the flesh good, the only begotten Son of God, the one whom we have seen, whom we have heard, whom we've looked upon and our hands have handled, and he is declaring Jesus Christ as the revelation of the one true God. In other words, there is not a special kind of knowledge that's needed so that my soul could escape my body and I am saved from my greatest ill, but the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ is the knowledge that the sinner needs by which we will be saved which will induce and motivate in us the desire to walk in the light and which will result in our having fellowship with God and with each other in Jesus Christ.

Not only, then, do we examine the text to come to know the more rightly our one true God, not only do we examine the text to understand the foundation for a Christian life, but we examine the text also in order that we might deeply humble ourselves before him. I referred in my congregational prayer the time when Moses saw the glory of God on the mountain, came down and his face so shone that the people of Israel asked him to cover his face with a veil. But do not forget now what Moses did when he saw the glory of God and let that be instructive for us tonight: he bowed himself down and worshiped. So will you and I when we see that God is light.

I call your attention to the text under that theme: God is light. Notice first, seeing the light. Second, walking in the light. And finally, enjoying fellowship in the light. Who is God? What is God like? And to answer that question from the viewpoint of the figure

that's in our text, what does light reveal about God? In the first place, God is glorious. That, of course, is true of light. Light is bright. I realize there are dim lights, the stars that you see at night are among those dim created lights, but look now at the sun and behold the glory of the sun and be amazed. You are blinded by the glory of the sun. It is pure light and brightness. There is, as the apostle says in our text, in God no darkness at all but there is also in the sun no mingling of light with darkness. The sun's rays dispel darkness completely. So light is pure and purely glorious.

So is God. God's glory is the sum total of all of his perfections or attributes. You list them, children learn them in essentials class, that God is independent. He is eternal and infinite. He's a God of love, of grace, of mercy, of truth, of wisdom. And there are many other virtues or perfections that he has, put them together and you see the glory of God. But his glory is unequalled as the light of the sun is unequalled. His glory is a pure glory. If there is no darkness in him, there is no diminishing of his glory in him by sin or by any other factor. His glory is pure and matchless. That, first of all, is what is meant when we read that God is light.

Secondly, that God is light means that God is holy. Now, we take one specific attribute and flesh it out a little and see it in the light of the text. We do so not because the apostle uses the word "holy" or "holiness" in so many words, but because very clearly that is the idea yet that he's getting at, in him is no darkness at all. That means that God, there is no fault, there is no stain or no blemish. He is perfectly holy. As the light, as the glorious God, he is devoted to himself and everything that he says, thinks and does serves the glory of his name. Nothing detracts from it. Besides, that holiness of Jehovah is exactly what the apostle is getting at in the text when he refers later to a walking in the light. There is no walking in the light apart from a holy walk in obedience to the will, the law and the word of God. So what is God's holiness? It is his perfect consecration to his own glory such that whatever he does, thinks and wills serves that glory. Nothing detracts from it but everything he does proclaims he is God unequalled in grandeur.

Thirdly, that God is light means that God and God's glory and his holiness are constant. Light, that is the light of the sun now, does not fail. That's not our perspective. Every evening the sun sets and darkness pervades the earth and sometimes even in the brightest of a noon hour the clouds, dark storm clouds roll in and the light of the sun is somewhat obscured but it isn't that the sun has failed giving light. Even you children know that when the sun is set but you go out on an evening and you behold the light of the moon, you understand that that is the light of the sun reflected off the moon. The moon is proof that the light of the sun is constant.

So Jehovah himself is constant. God has always been and he will not and has not changed. He is the one of whom it is said in Revelation 21, again the inspired Apostle John writing it, that in the new heavens and the new earth there will be no sun, no moon and no stars, but the glory of God will be the light that fills the new heavens and the new earth. His light is constant therefore his glory is unchanging and his holiness unwavering.

Here is a specific point at which the child of God bows down before this God in humble submission and adoration. The world around us does not acknowledge the unchanging unequalled glory of Jehovah God, the world around us has their idea of Jehovah, an idea which defiles him regardless of what idea that is because there are thousands of expressions of unbelief, but they all amount to this: Jehovah God is not the glorious being that he declares himself to be. Jehovah God is a figment of my imagination or of yours. He is whomever I think him to be or he is what I want him to be. And when man stands before the glory of the light of God as made known in the Scriptures, those Scriptures which declare God to be all good and the only fountain of all good, and when such a man observes in the history of the world storms and earthquakes and tornadoes and when such a man experiences in his own life pains and afflictions and troubles, such a man is prone to say, "God is not light. God is not so glorious. He owes me better than this." But you and I as we bow before Jehovah beholding his glory say, "Though Satan should buffet me and storms should afflict me, the Lord is my light and my salvation," as said the Psalmist in Psalm 27. Regardless of the circumstances of my life, Jehovah's glory shines forth unchangingly just as regardless of whether it's day or night, the sun shines.

Fourthly, that God is light means that God is primary or even better yet, is first. Do not forget that the creature to whom, which is used in the text with reference to God and to describe God, was the first creature created in creation week. Until God said, "Let there be light," and there was light, no other specific creature was formed. That's because light is primary. It's foundational and fundamental. It was necessary for the plants to grow and therefore plants are created later. It is necessary for the animals to see and to move. It is necessary for humans to have fellowship and interaction with each other. Light is primary and so God in his glory and in his holiness is primary.

We don't do justice to that just by saying that God is first. He is, of course, first in the sense that he is eternal and everlasting, but we do more justice to say that he is primary when we recognize that without him I cannot live. And I mean that now not only in a physical sense, that's certainly true, but even more in the spiritual sense. If I do not know this God, if I do not know this God as the Savior of sinners from sin and understand that that is what salvation consists of, then I do not recognize and confess and live in accordance with his being God and light. He is absolutely foundational to my life.

That God is light you and I must see. Now again, that's not a verb that we find in our text. There is no command in the text to behold God is light, but the apostle makes clear that he's getting at that when he says, "This is the message which we have heard of him and declare unto you." You must hear this, you must know this, and when you hear and know this, you must not just say, "Well, now, there's a fine intellectual truth that I've heard," you must see with the eyes of faith that God is light. To see that with the eyes of faith, that's a spiritual activity, of course, is to behold his glory and to fall down before him and to say how great the light which is my God. It is to confess the beauty of his holiness to come here to worship in the light of that beauty.

That you and I see him as light is, in itself, a wonder of grace. I am by nature dead in trespasses and sins and a dead man cannot give himself sight. He can't open his eyes to

see the light. The sun can be shining on his face in the casket and he will not because he cannot see it. That's you and that's me by nature. That I see God as light is not due to something I've done but it's due to his grace in Jesus Christ according to which he chose us from before the foundation of the world and then in time sent Jesus Christ to the death of the cross to earn for us the right to see his glory and then by his Spirit work the life of Christ in us, opening our hearts and eyes so that we could behold. And if you and I would focus with those eyes of faith renewed by the Spirit on Jesus Christ himself, we will see this light for God reveals himself as light in Jesus Christ.

That's clear, first of all, from the context. Again, the apostle is setting forth Jesus Christ, setting forth Jesus Christ as God in the flesh, says God is light. But that God manifests himself as light in Jesus Christ is also clear from a number of passages in the Gospel according to John. When one studies and reads through the first epistle of John, preaches through it as I've been doing, then one cannot but be struck with the fact that so many passages in the Gospel of John relate. John has his Gospel in mind as he writes his epistle.

Think of the opening verses, especially verses 6 and following of John 1, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Jesus Christ himself said as the apostle records, John 8:12, "I am the light of the world." And again John 9:5, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world," which is to say to you and to me, if we will see the light of God, we must look to Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, come in the flesh.

And as we do that, what do we behold? First of all, that Jesus Christ is the glorious revelation of the Father, "we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In manifesting the power of God in stilling the storm, the wisdom of God in dealing with men and showing himself as Lord of creation, the justice of God in the words of rebuke to the Pharisees, the mercy and grace of God in words of tender compassion to sinners, Jesus Christ manifested the glory of Jehovah God.

As we look at Jesus Christ, we see that he manifests especially the holiness of God, teaching that Jehovah hated sin, rebuking therefore those who would continue in sin, and calling sinners to repentance and then in all his own actions and work, living a holy life of dedication to God, Jesus Christ reveals God as light.

We see, thirdly, as we behold Jesus Christ as the revelation of God, the light, that Christ is constant and immutable. That is, as regards his person and as his work, he did not change. Think even of how that statement began, "I am the light of the world," and the many other "I am" statements of Jesus in which he said, as it were, that he is part of the "I AM THAT I AM," the eternal, unchanging God.

And as we behold Jesus Christ, the revelation of the light of God, we see that Christ is primary. Primary in that he was the firstborn in the council of God, the first begotten of

God also, and the first raised from the dead, then primary again in that apart from him and his work on my behalf, there is no salvation. Therefore to behold, to see the light of God in Jesus Christ is to look not only to the person and work of Jesus Christ in all of life but to focus on one specific moment or hour in the life of our Lord where the light of God shone forth most purely, even though for three hours it was dark, when he hung on the cross. Where more clearly than there did Jesus Christ show that he was devoted to the glory of the Father? Where more clearly than at Calvary did he make evident that he had come into the world to save sinners? And where more clearly than there did he show that his love for his church was an unchanging love because he was unchanging because God was unchanging?

Beloved, do you see this light and are you in awe? One who sees that light, truly sees it because his eyes have been opened by the grace of God, will walk in that light. In verses 6 and 7, the apostle refers to walking in the light as opposed to walking in darkness. It's not a stopping point. He has more to say. What he has more to say we'll get to in a third point but for now we'll notice that one must walk in the light. To walk in the light is to walk in the sphere of the light, in that area where the light shines.

You and I want to know where that is and what is true of that, then let us see, first of all, that this sphere is clearly marked. That's always true of an area illuminated by light. You can tell unless you're physically blind, you can tell the difference between light and darkness. Why do you get out a flashlight when you're walking at night and it's dark but because you would illuminate your way so that you can at least see to be guided. You can tell where that light ends and where the darkness begins. So the sphere in which you and I must walk or live is clearly marked. It is that area in which the light of the glory of God in Jesus Christ and in the Scriptures shines forth clearly, but we can say that that sphere is the sphere where the church of Jesus Christ is found and the Gospel is purely preached, where the word of God is loved and known and lived according to by regenerated saints.

Not only so but that sphere is clearly marked out by the word of God as the word of God sets forth now especially in his law, what a holy life consists of. And as the word of God describes and points out for us what kind of people they are who live such a life and calls you and me to join ourselves with fellow believers of Jesus Christ, that sphere is clearly marked. To underscore the point, the apostle says something else rather profound and astounding, "if we walk in the light, as he," that is, as God, "is in the light." Not only is he light but he is in the sphere of light.

Here again, to understand or explain the point, I can contrast the sun with the stars. Their light is bright. It's from the perspective of an earthling though that one looks up into the heavens at night and says of the stars, "I see pinpricks of light," but those lights are all in the sphere of darkness. They are surrounded by darkness. But now in the middle of the day when you look up at the sun you don't say, "I see the sun but it's in a sphere of darkness." Not only does the sun shine forth its light in all its glory but because its light is unequal, itself is in the sphere of the light, it shines forth and so with God. Not only is he light but you say of him, "Yes, I see the light but he's so far off. He's so far away." But

he's present. He is here. He is with his church. Where his word is, where Jesus Christ and the Spirit are, there God is. You know, beloved, where that sphere is.

Secondly, regarding that sphere in which we must walk, the text underscores something that I haven't done justice to yet and that is that it is emphatically an antithetical sphere. Leave the sphere of light and begin to walk in darkness, you are denying by practical expression of light the truth that God is light and you and I would be manifesting that we no longer behold that light, we are no longer in awe of God.

What is the sphere of darkness? Well, it certainly is not the sphere in which God is not present because God is everywhere present, but it is the sphere in which God is present but the glory of his saving grace in Christ is not confessed and loved. It is the world of unbelief and the world of ungodliness. It is that place where the unregenerate gather and the unbelievers gather to do and to carry out their works of darkness regarding which even the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5 said, "Have no fellowship with them. Do not walk there." You and I, understanding that the sphere is an antithetical sphere, must not simply say, "Well, of course I'm walking in the light. I went to church on Sunday and I'm not going to kill anyone this week and I'm not going to commit adultery this week." Oh no, because the sphere is an antithetical sphere, you and I have to take to heart the implied warning of the text that Satan wants to draw us back into the sphere of darkness. He would have us leave the sphere of light and my own sinful nature though the power of that darkness has been dispelled by the light of the grace of God, still has remnants of that darkness in it and I'm attracted to darkness. I must leave the darkness and walk in the light. It becomes, then, an antithetical calling.

You understand what it is to walk, I trust, as the apostle uses the word in the text. He's referring not to any earthly walk and he's not saying, "Now remember, don't go outdoors at night. You could trip and fall and there are dangers there that you're not aware of. So be sure if you do, you have a flashlight." He's not saying that. He's saying, "Pilgrim and stranger, the one who acknowledges that in relation to the world around, you and I have nothing fundamentally in common. One who sees the light of the celestial city and continues to aim toward that light and progress in life by a walk of faith toward that city, see to it, beloved, that your thinking and your willing and our speech and our hearing and our purposes and our motivations all accord with what God makes known of himself in his word and in Jesus Christ. Live in the light of the law. Let the revelation of God in the Scriptures and in Christ fill our hearts and minds."

Again, it was the Apostle Paul who put it this way in Ephesians 5, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly and avoid darkness." It's not so easily done yet the child of God must not say, "Well, I can hardly help it. I'm surrounded by this darkness." The apostle is calling us here to a life of conversion regarding which Lord's Day 33 says consists of the mortification of the old man and continual hatred of sin. And that I've offended God by my sins, fleeing from sin, the quickening of the new man more and more to walk in accordance with the will of God with all joy and delight.

So, young people, if I'm going to walk in the light, then I'm not going to listen to the world's music which only proclaim the darkness of unbelief. And middle-aged saints, I'm going to walk in the light, then my goals as a 30 year old or 40 year old, as a parent or a single individual, whichever I be, are not going to be the world's goals in life, to get more laid up here below. Elderly saints, as we walk in the light, bear up patiently in our infirmities and afflictions that come on us more and more in the body and we say, "But God is good." To walk in the light is not just a matter of outwardly keeping his law in speech and in thought and in action, but is to let the word and the revelation of God fill us.

I can try to use an earthly analogy. There are some who love to sunbathe. Without my making any more comments about sunbathing and such, the child of God as he walks in the light, basks in the revelation of God in Christ and thus finds the power as well as the motivation to walk and live a life of holiness.

Now, the point of the apostle in referring to our walk in godly life is to say that only in the way of walking in the light does one enjoy fellowship with God. Knowing God, knowing that he is love, knowing that he is light, we have fellowship with him and he makes this point both in verses 6 and 7, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But 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 cleanseth us from all sin." What is this fellowship? The Greek word so translated is the word "partnership." Fellowship is not just a matter of knowing one another, not just being somewhat in the vicinity of one another as we walk the same spiritual walk, but fellowship is a matter of joining together in the same activity which activity is fundamentally the glory of Jehovah God in all that I think and say and do. Partnership, that is joining together in the same activity.

Now, the apostle says we have fellowship with him. Of course, you and I understand because we are steeped in the Reformed tradition and we love Reformed theology, we understand the way in which we're going to explain that and the only way in which it can be explained. Nothing here about God saying to you and to me, "I need some help glorifying my name. Will you help me? If you help me, I will give you eternal life." None of that. We have been partnered with him because he said to you and to me, "You are my friends and because you are my friends, you are my servants and because you are my servants, you will aim to the glory of Jehovah God in all that we do just as he aims toward his glory." So the apostle in verse 6 is referring to fellowship between us and God, another wonder of grace that God should bring not the animals who never sinned or the trees that never sinned, but humans who sin into fellowship with him.

The apostle goes on in verse 7 to explain that this fellowship which is between us and God, by the grace of God is also between us and each other, "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." He chose me not only, but he chose us. He chose some not only, but he chose a body. And here is, again, the death knell to any individualistic thinking which quickly pervades our minds too, that God saved me and so I need only to take care of me and nobody else really matters. The doctrine of the



communion of saints as our Heidelberg Catechism explains it and the church has confessed it throughout the ages, gives no basis for a human to think that way. Think you have no fellowship with the fellow saint in the pew tonight? Think you have no fellowship with some of them because, after all, you only see them on Sunday when you go to church together and even then they sit in the back and you sit in the front and they go out one door and you go out another and you hardly ever talk to them so you have no fellowship? But, beloved, God chose us together and gave us the same task, the same calling, to aim to his glory. We are partnered together in the same work. It's a beautiful thing. It gives me incentive, then, to serve my fellow saints as I have opportunity and as they have need. And it humbles me and I recognize that that fellowship I have with God and with each other is on the basis of the blood of Jesus Christ which cleansed me from all sin and the same blood cleansed my brother or my sister for all his or her sin also.

Now, here's the point: only when walking in the light can you say you are enjoying and experiencing that fellowship with God and each other. Again, from an earthly viewpoint you can understand that. If it were true, it isn't so you're going to have to imagine something that is not true. But if it were true that the division between earthly light and darkness were so sharp that I here was in the light and you in the back of the auditorium were in pure and utter darkness, we couldn't see each other, maybe we could hear each other's voices but we could not work together, if that were true, then you understand what it would be like for to try to say they have fellowship with each other when one is obeying the law of God and living in accordance with his will and word and the other says, "Jesus Christ, that's a nice name. He was a great man. He set an example for me but I can do it on my own." There is no fellowship with one who is walking in darkness and another walking in light. They're in two completely different spheres and so the apostle is saying with regard to your fellowship with God and each other, the same is true.

You cannot as a student at Covenant Christian High School say you are having fellowship with other students if they are striving to live a godly life and when they sin acknowledge their sins and seek the forgiveness of sins in Christ, when you have no regard for what you watch and listen to. Don't say you're having fellowship with them, then. Nor can you and I come into the house of God tonight and say that we are having fellowship with Jehovah God if in our heart we love darkness and continue to live in darkness.

So emphatically is the apostle making that point that he says, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie." And he said that in the most strong term possible. He did not say we are deceived. There is a difference between lying and being deceived. He did not say if you say you have fellowship with God but you're living sin, poor you, you just don't really understand that you're not really having fellowship with God. He says rather we lie. Because Jehovah God has made so clear in his word that fellowship with him is enjoyed only in the way of obedience to his law and in the light of his revelation, Jesus Christ, for one to say, "I can live however I want and I have fellowship with God," is to say of God that he's wrong and of that God says, "Oh no." It isn't the light who is the liar, it is the sinner, you or me.

I must examine myself. Am I walking in the light only in which way I can enjoy fellowship with God? That fellowship with God is possible only in the light follows, again, from Jehovah being light. It follows from the purpose, the very practical purpose of light as a creature. Could Adam and Eve have had fellowship with each other without light? They could have talked to each other, somehow maybe in the dark they could have found each other, each talking to each other and they would have gotten closer and then held hands and not let go so that they were always with each other, but could they have fellowship in the degree you and I have it now because we can see? No, they could not have. They could have co-existed but their fellowship would not have been as deep and intimate.

So you and I have fellowship with God on the basis of the blood of Christ in the way of holy life. What joy this news gives. The apostle as I said earlier, is contrasting the true Christian Gospel set forth in the text and in the context with some heretical philosophical notion about a soul escaping a body by some special knowledge and you and I might say to ourselves, "There is joy in that? Some special thing I've never heard before?" You hear false prophets and teachers today too talk that way. "There is this one thing that the church has never understood before and I can teach it to you. It's the key." Not so. The knowledge of the true God in Jesus Christ, that is the key. Christ himself said, "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." What joy this message gives.

After many days in west Michigan, it can even extend to weeks of gloomy, cloudy, winter days, the sun shines and do you not go out and revel in it? Is that not an earthly joy that you delight in? All the more fellowship with God in the way of obedience to his word on the basis of his grace in Jesus Christ, we have that. He has provided it for us. Do you appreciate it? When, as happens, you and I are led astray and turn aside to sin and recognize we have left the sphere of light, do we look again to the blood of Jesus Christ which alone cleanses and then do we daily in prayer on our knees, open up his word and say, "Lord, shine thou the light of thy countenance upon me, upon us." Then the purpose of John in writing has he said in verse 4, is accomplished, "these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." God give us such full joy. Amen.

Our Father which art in heaven, we have not partnered with thee and even to use the word "*partnered*" is in the English to leave the wrong impression. *We are amazed that we are friend, servants of thine, and we had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of our God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Cause thou the light of thou countenance to shine upon us and may we behold thy glory and live in the light of it always. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*