

Chapter Eight: Walk in the Light

“Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of purity, truth, knowledge, prosperity, and happiness—as darkness is of the opposite” (Barnes 1468). Numerous passages contrast the two, exhorting us to be light and to follow the light. One of those passages is 1 John 1:5-10 where John plainly identifies God as light (verse 5) and exhorts us to walk in light as opposed to darkness (verses 6-10).

In the first part of the passage John writes, “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” (1 John 1:5). Message, *epangelia* (G: 1860), simply means “announcement” (Thayer 226). This announcement came from Jesus himself. John says, “which we heard of him.” Heard, *akouō* (G: 191), means “to get by hearing, learn (from the mouth of the teacher or narrator)” (Thayer 23). The message John was about to deliver was not second-hand knowledge but came directly from the mouth of Jesus. John heard it with his own ears and is now prepared to declare it to others. Declare, *anangellō* (G: 312), means “to tell, report, announce” (Strong 1590). It is “used of the formal proclamation of the Christian religion” (Thayer 36). John chose three simple words for the basis of his proclamation: “God is light” (verse 5). Light, *phōs* (G: 5457), literally refers to “light; daylight; firelight” (Strong 1653). In the figurative sense, however, light becomes so much more. “The extremely delicate, subtle, pure, brilliant quality of light has led to the use of [*phōs*]... as an appellation of God, i.e. as by nature incorporeal, spotless, holy” (Thayer 662). Notice that God is not “a light,” one light among many, nor is he “the light,” the most important light. God is neither of those for he is light itself.

This report asserts the excellency of the divine nature. He is all that beauty and perfection that can be represented to us by light. He is a self-active uncompounded spirituality, purity, wisdom, holiness, and glory. And then the absoluteness and fulness of that excellency and perfection. There is no defect or imperfection, no mixture of anything alien or contrary to absolute excellency, no mutability nor capacity of any decay in him. (Henry *New* 10:98)

There is nothing purer in this world than light. What a fitting appellation for God as he is not only light but also “in him is no darkness at all” (verse 5). Darkness, *scotia* (G: 4653), is the exact opposite of light. In the Greek this phrase is a strong negation; “No, not even one speck of darkness” (Jamieson 1498). “The expression here is designed to affirm that God is absolutely perfect; that there is nothing in him which is in any way imperfect, or which would dim or mar the pure splendor of his character, not even as much as the smallest spot would the sun” (Barnes 1468). God is light. God is pure. God is perfect. If it were not so, God would not be God. So, as John begins his discourse, he does so with the great truth that God is fit for the very name he and he alone owns. These three words proclaim a very simple, yet profound truth which is the foundation of “all proper views of religion” (Barnes 1468).

By contrasting a walk in light with a walk in darkness John exhorts us to walk in the light that is God. “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” (1 John 1:6-7). John begins with those who claim to have fellowship with God yet continue to walk in darkness. Fellowship, *koinonia* (G: 2842), means “joint participation” (Thayer 352) and indicates “communion, fellowship, sharing in common” (Vine 233). Those who have fellowship have the same goals and work together to achieve those goals. They work by the same set of standards and strive together as one for a single purpose. Walk, *peripateō* (G: 4043), signifies our daily activities, the way we live (Vine 664). Since light and darkness are opposites and since God is light, those who walk in darkness can have no fellowship with God. “To walk in darkness is to live and act according to such ignorance, error, and erroneous practice, as are contrary to the fundamental dictates of our holy religion” (Henry *New* 10: 99). If God is light, then to walk in darkness is to live by any means outside of God’s will. There is no communion between light and darkness. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). Therefore, those who claim fellowship with God, yet walk in darkness “lie, and do not the truth” (1 John 1:6). These two positions are irreconcilably different and opposed. To claim fellowship with God while walking in darkness is to profess lies and deceit. Those who make such claims do “not act truly... To *do the truth* is to act in accordance with the truth; and the expression here means that such an one could not be a Christian” (Barnes 1468). They may claim to walk in light and have fellowship with God, but their actions prove their words empty. We cannot have fellowship with God while walking in darkness.

“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” (1 John 1:7). To walk in light is to live and act according to the wisdom, truth and righteousness of God.

Walking in the light may include the three following things: (1.) Leading lives of holiness and purity; that is, the Christian must be characteristically a holy man, a light in the world by his example [Matthew 5:14-16]. (2.) Walking in the truth; that is, embracing the truth in opposition to all error of heathenism and infidelity, and having clear, spiritual views of truth [2 John 4; 2 Timothy 2:15]... (3.) Enjoying the comforts of religion; that is, having the joy which religion is fitted to impart, and which it does impart to its true friends [Galatians 5:22-23]. (Barnes 1468)

Those who walk in the light pattern their lives after God who is light and is in the light. It is our duty as Christians to strive to be like God in his purity, righteousness and justness. “Walking in the light, the element in which God Himself is, constitutes the test of fellowship with him... Walking in the light as he is in the light, is no mere imitation of God, but an identity in the essential element of our daily walk with the essential element of God’s eternal being” (Jamieson 1498). To walk in the light is to reform our identity to take upon ourselves the characteristic of God’s identity, such as his purity and righteousness. Paul told the Romans to be

“transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). Transformed, *metamorphoō* (G: 339), means “to change into another form” (Vine 639). Paul speaks against conformity to the world and demands a metamorphosis. This transformation is accomplished by renewing the mind. Renewing, *anakainōsis* (G: 342), means “a renewal” and indicates “the adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God [Philippians 2:5], which is designed to have a transforming effect upon the life” (Vine 524). We begin by forming our minds, our inward selves, into the mind of God, which results in a change of our actions as our renewed minds lead us into the light. Thus, we “undergo a complete change which... will find expression in character and conduct” (Vine 639). By walking in the light, we are able to have fellowship with God and all those who likewise walk in the light.

Additionally, “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Cleanseth, *katharizō* (G: 2511), means “to purify from all filthiness” (Jamieson 1498) and signifies “to make clean, to cleanse...from the guilt of sin” (Vine 104). We first come in contact with the blood of Christ when our sins are washed away in baptism and we rise to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-7). As we continue to walk in the light, we have continued access to the blood of Christ to continually take away our sins. The condition, however, is that we acknowledge our sins. “If we say that 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” (1 John 1:8-9). If we deny our sins, we only deceive ourselves. Deceive, *planaō* (G: 4105), means “to cause to stray, to lead astray, lead aside from the right way... to lead away from the truth, to lead into error” (Thayer 514). By denying our sins we lead ourselves away from the truth and into error for “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). On the other hand, if we confess our sins they will be forgiven. Confess, *homologeō* (G: 3670), properly means “to say the same thing as another, i.e. to agree with, assent” and further, “to admit or declare one’s self guilty of what one is accused of” (Thayer 446). To confess our sins is to agree with God and admit we have sinned. God, then, is “faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Faithful, *pistos* (G: 4103), means “faithful, trustworthy, reliable” (Strong 1636). It is used “of persons who show themselves faithful in the transaction of business, the execution of commands or the discharge of official duties” (Thayer 514). God is true to his word. We can rely on God to do what he has promised he would do. It is part of his just character to do so. Just, *dikaios* (G: 1342), refers to “one who is such as he ought to be” (Thayer 148). “Said of God, it designates the perfect agreement between His nature and His acts” (Vine 338). In this case, we can rely on God to forgive our sins because he has promised to do so. Forgive, *aphiēmi* (G: 863), means “to let go, give up, a debt, by not demanding it... i.e. to remit, forgive” (Thayer 85). God has every right to hold us accountable for our sins. His just character actually demands it if our sins have not been washed away by the blood of Christ. His faithfulness, likewise, dictates

he not demand we repay our debt if the blood of Christ has already paid it. Not only has our debt been paid but also we have been cleansed from all unrighteousness. Cleanse, *katharizō* (G: 2511), is the same Greek word as cleanseth in verse seven. Thus, it also means “to purify from all filthiness (Jamieson 1398). Unrighteousness, *adikia* (G: 93), is “wickedness, evil, wrongdoing” (Strong 1588). It is the opposite of righteousness, that which God represents. Used here, unrighteousness represents sin, moral filthiness, which has been pardoned and forgiven. When we acknowledge our sins and seek forgiveness, we are purified from the taint and guilt of sin.

It is important to not to forget we must acknowledge our sins in order to have them forgiven. “Pardon, in the Scriptures, always supposes that there is confession, and there is no promise that it will be imparted unless a full acknowledgement has been made” (Barnes 1469). John reiterates this truth in verse ten: “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:10). Previously, in verse eight, John noted we deceive ourselves when we deny our sins. Now, he ups the ante and declares we make God a liar when we deny our sins. God said, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). By denying we have sinned we call God a liar, but God “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). He is faithful and just. Contrarily, we are not without sin and error. If we deny that truth, God’s Word is not in us. “‘His word,’ which is ‘the truth’ (vs8), accuses us truly; by denying it we drive it from our hearts (cf. John 5:38)” (Jamieson 1498). If we deny this part of God’s Word, then we may as well deny all of God’s Word. If we deny any part of God’s Word, then his truth is not in us; it is not a part of our lives and we do not practice it. Therefore, we walk in darkness rather than light and our sins have not been forgiven.

God is light. With these three words John declares a simple yet profound truth. These three words proclaim the purity, holiness and righteousness of God; the very characteristics that enable God to be God. Since God is light and can have no fellowship with darkness, we must be in that light to have fellowship with him. To walk in the light is not just to reflect or mirror God’s character, but to transform our character into his character. To walk in the light is not to copy God’s purity, holiness and righteousness but to become pure, holy and righteous. This enables us to have fellowship with God and all others who likewise walk in the light. The key to this transformation and consequent blessing is to admit our sins so they can be forgiven. When we do not acknowledge our sins, we deceive ourselves and make God a liar. “The whole system of Christianity is based on the fact that man is a fallen being, and needs a Saviour; and unless a man admits that, of course he cannot be a Christian” (Barnes 1469). We cannot walk in the light while denying our sins and the consequent need for the blood of Christ. We must admit our faults and renew our minds, thereby transforming our very lives to walk in the light. Only then can we have fellowship with God and enjoy the blessings he is faithful and just to give his true followers. May we all be transformed and walk in the light that is God.

Questions:

1. What does light represent in the Scriptures? _____

2. What does darkness represent in the Scriptures? _____

3. What three simple words did John use as the basis of his proclamation?

 - a. What does that phrase mean? _____

 - b. What is meant by the phrase “in him is no darkness at all”? _____

4. What relationship can we not have with God if we walk in darkness? _____

 - a. What does it mean to walk in darkness? _____

 - b. What is the result of claiming fellowship with God while walking in darkness? _____

5. What relationship do we have with God when we walk in the light? _____

 - a. What blessing do we enjoy from that relationship? _____

 - b. What is the condition to receive this blessing? _____

6. What happens when we refuse to acknowledge our sins? _____

7. How does God's faithfulness and justice relate to the forgiveness of our sins?

8. In your own words, describe what it means to walk in the light. _____
