1 John 1 – Walking in the Light as He is in the Light

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Well, here we are on Wednesday night, and as you know, we just finished the Old Testament last Wednesday, so we have nothing to do on a Wednesday night. So, we're just going to talk. No actually, we're going to start picking up some of the books that we need to go through in the New Testament. So tonight, we're going to be in 1 John. So, go ahead and open your Bibles there to 1 John.

You're going to be getting a lot of John here in the next several months. We're in the Gospel of John on Sunday morning, now we're going to be in the letters of John here on Wednesday evening. We're going to take a short trip through Jude's letter after we finish the third letter of John, and then we'll be back to the writings of John in the book of Revelation.

So, we're going to get a lot of John, and yet, it's funny, when you get a lot of John, you learn how he talks. When I was in Bible college, one of the classes that I took required us to actually write a commentary on the three letters of John. The class was called “The Johannine Epistles,” and so we had to actually write a commentary and then turn it in at the end of the semester and get graded on it.

Well, what's interesting about doing something like that—when you spend a lot of time listening to a particular way an author writes—you get very accustomed to their style, just the way they talk. Whether it's C.S. Lewis or A.W. Tozer or the Apostle John, you can just kind of learn their style, and it is actually kind of helpful.

So, here we are. Let me give you a little introduction to the first letter of John. We call it a letter but—and it is—but unlike the letters that the Apostle Paul wrote, this letter has no opening address, and it has no closing greeting that we typically find in Paul's letters.

John is, this letter is addressed to Christians, and while it is a relatively short letter, it's not one that we're going to find a Systematic Theology in. You know it's not going to be like Romans. Romans is amazing. You can go through the book of Romans and put together a Systematic Theology of Christianity that is

just unmatched. I mean, he just did an amazing job. That's not what John is trying to do in this letter.

Rather, this is a warning largely—and there's a lot of encouragement in here as well—but it is a warning against the dangers of false teaching. And that is primarily what John wants to convey in this first letter. He is going to confront various teachings, beliefs, that he believed were dangerous and attempting to invade the church.

Interestingly though, it wasn't the enemies of Christianity that were doing the damage. It was basically from within. These heretical teachings were being generated by men who thought—who were in the church—but thought that they could improve on God's word. And don't you know that's always a dangerous place to be—when we think we can improve on God's word, when we add to, take away, or do anything else to God's word to change it or compromise it or alter it in any way.

And this is what they were trying to do. But the reason they were trying to do it — and this is not uncommon even for today—but the reason they were trying to do it was they wanted to try to make Christianity a little more intellectually respectable. Because, you know, in every culture there's kind of an intellectual community that sticks up its nose at Christianity and essentially treats it like it's very low brow.

And if you guys were just a little smarter, you know, you might think differently. And that's what was going on in the early church already. Keep in mind something about John—you know, he outlived all the other apostles of the Lamb; he is the only apostle that we know did not suffer a martyr's death.

So, he lived to a fairly old age, and he saw some generations come and go in Christianity. And during the course of that time, he saw things change. He saw things cool in the Christian Church. And this is what—kind of what was going on, and this is what he's addressing. It's kind of this seductive side of what are the popular notions of the day that try to make their way into the church and draw people away from a very simple and pure faith in Jesus.

You know, the Apostle Paul warned of these very same things. Those of you women who've been going through the Women of the Word study in Colossians, you know this, because Paul talked about it in Colossians. Let me put it on the screen for you, from Colossians Chapter 2, Paul wrote and said:

Colossians 2:8 (ESV)
"[8]*See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit*, (he called it—that was essentially predicated upon human tradition), *according to the elemental spirits of the world*, (in other words, worldly thinking, worldly philosophies, worldly ideologies—rather than that which) *is according to Christ*" (and from the scripture).

And this is—this was a threat back in the early church, and it is a threat today. It is still going on. And you know, this is one of the things that I love about the way we approach the Bible here at Calvary Chapel. And that is, we just want to take the simple Word. It's just like, give me the simple Word, and if it's not here, if it's not in the Word, we're not going to entertain it. I get emails all the time people asking me about things that are going on in the body of Christ that people have kind of just added.

And a lot of it comes from Roman Catholicism, as you can well imagine. And Roman Catholicism is probably guilty of adding, probably more than any other religious group, to the basics of Christianity. But even in Pentecostalism, it's not uncommon for me to get an email saying, "Pastor Paul, what does it mean to be slain in the spirit, and is that in the Bible?"

And I get to write them back and say, "It is nowhere in the pages of scripture. You will not find the term slain in the spirit. You will not find the concept of being slain in the spirit in the Bible. It is not in the Bible." So, then people want to know, where did it come from? Well, we made it up. We made it up along the way because we had an experience that we had to give a name to. And that's usually what I'll say when I respond to people like that—that is taking experience and exalting it over the revelation of God's word.

And I think that's dangerous. It was dangerous in the first century. It's dangerous today, and this is what John is going to be talking about. He's going to be answering some of these ideas. He's also going to be talking about—and you'll see it through the course of this letter— it's pretty clear that one of the things the false teachers were addressing was a denial of the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, came in human flesh. So, John's going to answer that as well.

He will also speak to believers about the kind of life that they're living as believers. It's going to be a very practical letter for us in terms of the various exhortations that he gives us related to just walking in obedience to God—which John saw chiefly—he saw obedience as loving God, loving people.

In fact, there's an extra Biblical account of John toward the end of his life, telling the Christian Church to very simply, love one another. And that was his message toward the end of his life. He would get up and simply say, "Little children, love one another." And that was—and it's a good message.

But you know, John's going to talk a lot in this letter about the hallmarks of a genuine faith in Jesus Christ. When somebody comes to the Lord, makes Him Savior, opens their heart to Him, he's going to talk about what kind of things that we ought to be seeing in that person's life.

Now, as we get into Chapter 1, you'll notice that John begins by writing about Jesus without actually referring to Him by name, which is something else that John likes to do. And I'm going to read through Verses 1 through 3 altogether, and then we're going to go back and look at what he's saying here. So, follow along with me, Chapter 1 Verses 1-3:

1 John 1:1-3 (ESV)
"[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— [2] 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— [3] 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."

Now, the reason I wanted to read those all together is—you might have noticed, if you have an ESV, at least that you're looking at—you're going to notice that at the end of Verse 1, there's a long dash. In typist terms, we call that an em dash. And then at the beginning or at the end of Verse two, there's another em dash, and that is put there to show you that what you're reading here in these three verses is what we call an interrupted sentence.

In other words, John begins a thought—he starts it in Verse 1—but he interrupts himself, and he says something in Verse 2 that adds to the details of what he's saying. And then after that, he finishes what he's going to say in his original thought in Verse 3.

The Apostle Paul did this all the time. He—in fact, the Apostle Paul is known—he's the king of the run-on sentence, and he would often interrupt himself. He'd start talking about something, and then it would take like two Chapters to get back to what he was saying, you know. And so, he would—at least, John only interrupts himself for one Verse, you know. But anyway, so Verses 1 and 3

make up the original thought that John wanted to convey, and Verse 2 is the interruption.

So, let me put on the screen his original thought without the interruption. So, this will kind of help. You'll see how he was talking here. Here's how he goes. He says:

1 John 1:1-3 (ESV)
"[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, [3]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."

Do you see how without the interruption, that sentence just flows so much more smoothly? You know, but we're going to take the whole thing—but we're going to keep these Verses up, on the screen here for a little bit, and we're going to be kind of talking about what he is saying to us here.

Notice in Verse 1, John starts off the way he likes to start off—"*In the beginning*." You'll notice that he does it just like he starts his Gospel account. You'll remember in John, the Gospel, Chapter 1 Verse 1, he wrote, "*In the beginning was the Word,*" right? Well, so here he says: "*That which was from the beginning, we proclaim to you*."

And in both instances, he is saying that in the person of Jesus, God entered time. All right? In the person of Jesus—who has always dwelt in eternity—God entered time. And that's what he is saying by "*In the beginning*." In other words, at the beginning of all things, the beginning of time, there was Jesus and so forth, and this is what we proclaim to you.

But as we keep reading, we're going to see that John's proclamation is not just informational and intellectual sort of stuff that he's passing along—like he read it in a book or heard it in a lecture or something like that. We're going to see here that what he's sharing with us is very personal. It's very experiential.

Notice what he says in Verse 1, where he goes on to say, "*which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon*." You might say, "Wait a minute, why did he say '*looked upon*' right after he said, we saw it '*with our eyes*?' Isn't that the same thing?" No, it's not. The Greek verb here means to gaze upon something and to focus on it until you understand the significance of it. That's what that Greek verb literally means.

So, he's saying, yes, we saw with our eyes, but then we gazed upon it. In other words, we focused on it. And what John is telling you—in these experiential sort of expressions is—I am an eyewitness of these things, but I wasn't just there to see, I was involved. I touched. I held. I heard. Right? I gazed upon to the point of understanding, and that's what he wants you to know.

Now, let's look at what we removed in Verse 2. Read with me again in Verse 2. He says, *"[2]The life was made manifest*," (that's an important phrase) *"and we have seen it and testified to it and proclaimed to you, the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us."* And the whole point of this statement is to declare to you that Jesus, who is the living Word of God, was made manifest or made flesh. That's what he means by "*was made manifest*." You'll remember he said the same thing in his Gospel in the first chapter of his Gospel account. Let me put it on the screen just to remind you. It's:

John 1:14 (ESV)
"[14]And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

What do you see on the screen? You see John declaring something about Jesus. What do you see him declaring? You see him declaring that the Word—who is Jesus—was made flesh.

Is that what you see? That's what I see, and it's also what John is saying here in 1 John when he talks about the fact that "*the life was made manifest."* Okay? The reason I'm emphasizing that, just this morning, interestingly enough, I had a guy respond to, made a comment on one of my YouTube videos. By making the claim—and he was out to make a point— and he started off by saying, "Pastor Paul, why don't you teach through the King James Bible—with the King James Bible?"

And so, we linked him to a blog post I made about Bible translations, and he didn't like that. So, he came back, and he made a follow up comment. And he basically said that all of the other English translations of the Bible remove any idea of Jesus come in the flesh. And I was flabbergasted, you know, by that statement. And I don't normally read the comments that people make on YouTube to be honest with you. I don't look at them very often, but I saw this one and I just had to comment. So, I did, I commented, and I said, well, you are 100% wrong, because, you know, frankly, I have no problem with the King James version of the Bible, but I never studied it.

In fact, I kind of cut my teeth on the NIV when I first came to the Lord. And then, as you know now, we've switched to the ESV as far as, you know, what I teach from. And I've never ever studied the King James version of the Bible. And you know what? I was never in doubt of the fact that Jesus came in the flesh.

It was always crystal clear in all the other Bible translations that I've looked at —and you see it right here, you know, from John 1:14, *"the Word became flesh."* What else do you need? So, it's just one of those things. Once in a while, you get people like that—just kind of, they've been convinced, they've been influenced, and they've been misled about something related to Bible translations.

And honestly, there's not a whole lot you can say sometimes to convince them otherwise. But I'm showing you in case anybody ever comes up to you with a similar kind of a claim that tells you—and by the way, we call those people "King James onliests." Seriously, that's the name. I didn't make it up. And it refers to somebody who believes that the King James version of the Bible is the only true version of the Bible, and everything else has been polluted and corrupted. And it's just not true. It's just not true. Anyway, there you go, in case you ever kind of hear that one.

But the question we want to ask is—John is making this proclamation about the Word, the manifested Word, who we know to be Jesus—and we want to ask the question, why is he making this proclamation? Well, he answers that question himself in Verse 3. If you look with me in Verse 3, when he says, here's why we're doing this, here's why *"we proclaim this to you so that you too may have fellowship with us."* And he goes, oh, and by the way, and also and *"our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."*

All right, John just told you why he's proclaiming this in this letter, because he says, I want to be able to have fellowship with you. Now by fellowship, he's not talking about sitting around and singing songs and eating nachos. When John refers to fellowship with believers, among believers, and fellowship with the Lord, he's talking about an intimate spiritual connectedness that comes when we are born again into the family of God.

And I trust that you know what I'm talking about. I trust, you know what it is to be spiritually connected to the body of Christ to the point where you know that you know, that you know, we are family, and nobody has to tell you. I don't know if you've ever had an experience like that—where you've been out in public and met up with a complete stranger, and then got to talking, and the

both of you find out that you are believers in Christ, and suddenly, you are talking and you know it. You know that you're talking to a family member. And it feels like you've known them all your life, and you just met them five minutes ago. But they're believers. It's just—it's so delightful.

Sue and I had this happen just Monday—day before yesterday. We went to Boise and went to a home of a gentleman—who was selling a particular item—and his daughter. He was elderly and his daughter was there as well, and they were believers. And we walked in the door—never met these people before—and instantly we're just—we're fellowshipping with them, you know, and it was just so cool.

There is a depth of connectedness, for lack of a better word, that nothing but Jesus can account for between believers when we're talking to another believer—a brother or a sister in Jesus Christ. And it is because of our connectedness—first to the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit—that we are now supernaturally connected to one another. And I hope that you've experienced that. That's what John is saying. "I'm proclaiming this today, so that we can have that sweet fellowship with you." Because you know what? You can't have it outside of Christ. You can't have that kind of spiritual connectedness outside of Jesus Christ.

And I trust you've experienced that too. Have you ever been in a situation where you were the only believer amidst a group of unbelievers, and you felt like an alien? I mean, like one of those green aliens with antenna. And you just felt like you were just completely out of place, and there was really nothing that you had in common with those people. And it's very challenging.

Let me tell you something, there's other dynamics that go with this. You have to remember that some people walk into churches, and they feel that way because they haven't yet come to Christ.

And here you are acting like a family and talking to people and praying with people and loving on people and caring for people—and this is just part of what it means to be the family of God, because there's that supernatural connection that causes the fellowship to take place in our lives—and somebody walks in, and they don't have it. And they walk in—and that's not to say that we should back off on it at all. I think they should see it.

They need to see the love of Jesus among fellow believers. In fact, you know, Jesus told us that the world would know that we belong to Him by the love we have one for another. And so, it ought to be there. But you need to know that if

you see somebody walking through the door, and they've got that kind of deer-in-the-headlight look, you know, and they're kind of—and they look completely out of place, then that's probably why—because they probably are. There's a lack of connectedness.

The other place where this dynamic comes into play is exactly why the Bible—why Paul said in the Scripture that "*you are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers*."

The biggest yolk that we usually apply that to is marriage. I mean, there's other kinds of coming together—being yoked together in business and that sort of thing. But, you know, to be unequally yoked in marriage is a very challenging situation, because you can share certain elements of intimacy with your spouse. If your spouse is an unbeliever, you can be intimate on a physical level with them, you can be intimate even on an emotional level with them, you can be intimate on an intellectual level with them to a degree, but you cannot be intimate on a spiritual level with an unsaved spouse. You just can't do it because they can't have that kind of intimacy with you. That fellowship is out of bounds. It's unavailable to them because it comes through Jesus. It only comes through Him.

And that's why Paul exhorts believers not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. You will forever be driving in a car that's missing one cylinder. It's not firing on one cylinder. It might fire on the others to some degree, but if you ever had a car that had one spark plug that was completely out, it doesn't run well. And it's the same for marriage.

And Paul knew that and he wanted you—God wants you— to have a marriage where you're firing on all cylinders, and every aspect of intimacy that is available to you in marriage is being utilized and enjoyed, because it is meant to be enjoyed. Marriage is the most glorious, joyful thing when you're firing on all cylinders.

So, for those of you that have an unsaved spouse, keep praying. Don't stop praying. Keep bringing up to the Lord. You know. Then you can even tell the Lord, "I want to have that intimacy with my spouse. I want to have spiritual intimacy with my husband or my wife. I want that." He wants it too.

John goes on to disclose yet another reason for writing what he did in Verse 4. Look what he says there, "[4]*We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*"

And he's talking about the joy of that fellowship, that intimacy. He's talking about Christian joy. When there is the joy of what it is to be the family of God. And it's a really wonderful thing.

Now in the rest of the verses of this chapter, John is going to focus on one of his favorite themes and it's the theme of light and darkness. All right?

And he begins by talking about why this is such an important theme. I want you to look with me in your Bible in Verse 5. This is an important verse, he says, "[5]*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*"

Now, what John is doing here is, he is making a theological statement about the character and the nature of God. And it is true in every context and every circumstance.

"*God is light*," John says, "*and in him is no darkness*." Now, you need to understand that, by definition, that means there is no darkness, because—in God obviously at all—because if there's light, that means an absence of darkness. Okay?

Now, the reason I emphasize that is because Christians hear this statement all the time, but they don't think through the implications of what it means. And the reason I say that is, because I get questions from people, and then if they truly understood this, they wouldn't be asking the question. One of the common questions I get— and it is mostly from new believers, I will say that— is the question about why there is so much suffering in the world if God is good.

And it is a fairly common question. And what they're asking is this, if God is good and He created the world, then the world, in their logical thinking, ought to be a reflection of that goodness. Right? But they see that it's not, and they want to know why. They want to know why. "You keep telling me that God is good. Then you also tell me God created all things."

But see, that doesn't compute to the young believer, because they see things in the world—in what they consider to be God's creation of the world—that are not good, and they want to know why that is. And of course, the answer is that the world that God made, which was good in every way, was plunged into darkness by the sin of man. That is where darkness comes from. It does not come from God because in Him is no darkness.

That is the theological implication of that statement. Okay? It is impossible for darkness to come from God because He is light. Right? And in Him is no darkness at all. Darkness doesn't exist in the person of God. Man's sin brought darkness about, and it affected the world, and it affected the people of the world, and it corrupted pretty much everything.

We still see some beauty in this world, you know, but boy, it's just an echo of God's original beautiful creation, which by the way, one day will be remade. But for now, we live in a world that is shrouded in darkness. Okay, so now that we've established that in God there is no darkness but only light, we can talk about how that affects our lives now as Christians living in a dark world.

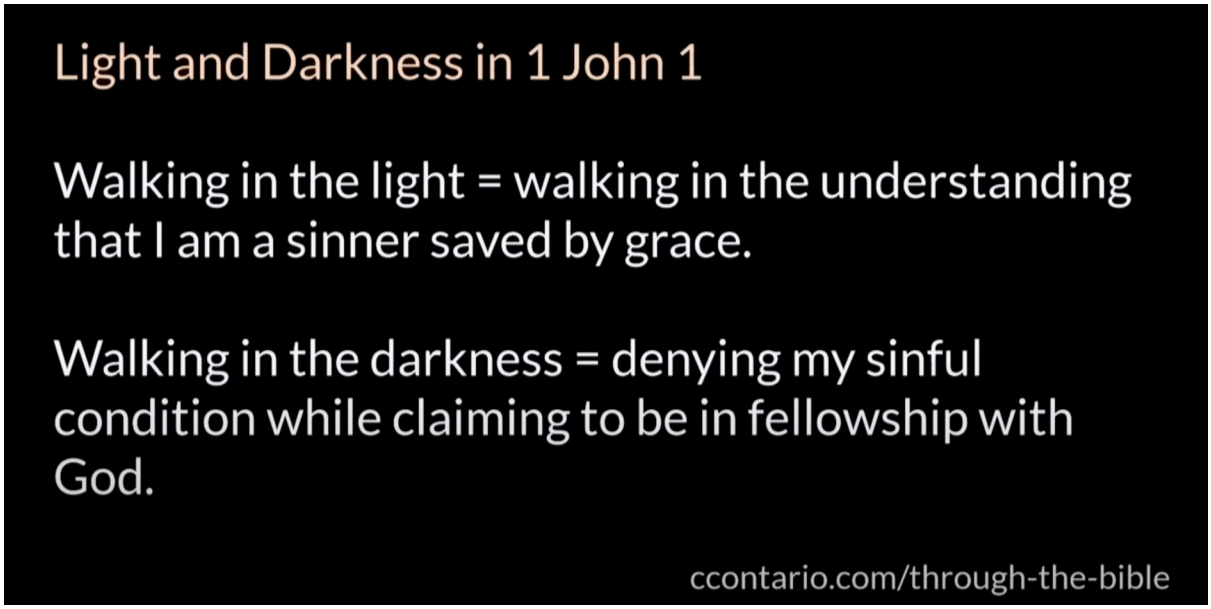
Okay? Look what John says in Verse 6: "[6]*If we say we have fellowship*" (there's that word again, that's that spiritual intimacy) "*If we say we have that spiritual intimacy with God while* (at the same time, he says) "*we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*" Okay, so he is talking about somebody who's claiming to have that connectedness with God—that we're talking about earlier — and connectedness with His children, and yet, they're actively walking in darkness. He says that that person is lying.

Now, here's the thing that we have to understand. Don't assume that you know what walking in darkness means, because most people, I'll just tell you right now, get it wrong. Most people read this passage and they assume that walking in darkness means walking in sin. It does not.

He's going to explain in the context of these verses what it does mean. All right. So, the next thing that's what he's going to do, is define this whole idea of what it means to walk in darkness.

I'm going to give you a spoiler, okay? Because I think it's going to help as we read these verses—as we read on. Let me put it up on the screen for you. Here's the spoiler— light and darkness as it applies to 1 John:1:

(slide)



Walking in the light—that means walking in the understanding that I'm a sinner saved by grace. Okay? It doesn't mean walking in purity. That's what people assume. Walking in the darkness—that means denying my sinful condition while claiming to be in fellowship with God. It doesn't mean walking in sin specifically. It means walking in a denial of my sin. You with me? That, John says, is "*darkness*."

When someone walks in denial or in a compromising attitude and says, "Well, you know, what I'm doing isn't so bad. I'm not that bad of a person, you know. I'm a lot better than a lot of other people." That person's walking in darkness—even if they're—even if those words come out of the mouth of a believer.

Okay, now with that understanding that walking in the light means I'm walking in the full understanding that I'm a sinner saved by grace, right? And I still sin. I mess up, right? I mess up. But that's walking in the light. I'm walking in the revelation of my sin. You don't have to tell me that I'm a sinner. I know it. You don't have to tell me the things I do are sin. I know it full well. I'm walking in the light. Okay?

Now check out Verse 7, "[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.*"

Now, there's a couple of things about this verse that are very important to see. When I recognize that I'm a sinner saved by grace, I can have fellowship with you, and you can have it with me.

But what cuts off that fellowship is when I start denying my sin. Have you ever had a relationship with another believer where they entered into sin, but they wouldn't believe it? They wouldn't deal with it. They just kind of denied it. And you knew it was going on. You knew it was happening, but they were denying it.

Was your fellowship broken? Yes, it was. It will be. It always will be. When we come together and there's an openness toward the fact that, you know, I mess up, you mess up. We're, you know, we're believers saved by grace—sinners saved by grace. Now we can have fellowship. We can talk. We can have that spiritual intimacy. But if there's hidden sin in somebody's life and they're denying it and just carrying on like it's not that big of a deal, they're just not dealing with it, that fellowship is broken—that closeness and intimacy.

Now, there's something else that John is saying here in this verse that tells you what walking in the light means. Remember, we said it means walking in the perpetual understanding that I do mess up.

He says here, "*if we walk in the light*" —now let's skip to the end of the verse—"*the blood of Jesus, his son cleanses us from all sin.*" See, if walking in the light means walking in purity, this verse wouldn't make any sense. It would go like this—but if we walk in purity, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin. Wait a minute, we don't need to be cleansed from sin because we're walking in purity. You see? That tells you right there—that walking in the light doesn't mean walking in purity. It means walking in a revelation of understanding that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*," and I'm one of them. That's what walking in the light is.

But I want you to know something about this—he says, "*the blood of Jesus, his son cleanses us from all sin*." If you don't have that word "*cleanses*" underlined or circled, or highlighted in your Bible, it should be, and I'll tell you why. In the Greek, that word is in what we call the present tense.

And if you learned your grammar, this is the same in English grammar, present tense means ongoing. It keeps going. It's always present. Okay? So, what does that mean when it says, "*the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin?*" It means the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing us from all sin as we walk in the light. Okay?

So, you see, as I walk in the light, as you walk in the light, we recognize that we sin. And that means when the Holy Spirit convicts us of something we've done that is wrong—we said something, thought something, did something, whatever

— and the Holy Spirit convicts you and says, “Yeah, that was nasty. That was wrong.”

And what do we do? We go, “You're right, Lord. You're right. Father, forgive me. Forgive me. Shouldn't have done that. Shouldn't have said that. Shouldn't have thought that. Forgive me.” What happens? The blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing us from all sin. There's this perpetual cleansing as we walk in the light, as we walk in the simple understanding that I'm a mess up. You know.

But now, John is going to describe the opposite of walking in the light. Look at Verse 8, “*If we say we have no sin* (here's the person who's denying it, he says,) *we deceive ourselves* (literally a matter of self-deception, he says,) *and the truth is not in us*.” What truth is he talking about? “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*.” Right?

It's the truth. It's the truth. But if you deny it, and you say, “Well, I don't—I'm not—that isn't a sin” or whatever, he says, you're literally self-deceived, and the truth isn't in you. Well, what else is going to happen? You're not going to be able to have fellowship and the blood of Jesus is not going to keep cleansing in that sense that he was talking about because you've shut it off—you've shut off the flow by denying the whole process.

So, we don't walk in that attitude of self-deception. We walk in the revelation of truth—that I still sin. Do you know, one of the more common questions I get—again from brand new believers—is “If I'm truly saved, why do I still mess up? Why do I still sin?” It's a pretty common question, and I want to say to them, “What exactly were you expecting?”

Because see, when you come to Jesus, He cleanses you. He washes you. He redeems you. He adopts you. He seals you for the day of redemption, and it is a beautiful and wonderful thing. But He does not remove your sinful nature. That sinful nature is still there. Now, I'm not saying that we should not care about sin, and I'm not saying that Jesus doesn't give us victory over life-controlling and habitual sins. He does! And we should expect that we are going to be overcomers—and even more than overcomers—in areas of sin in our lives.

We should walk in victory, but we're not going to walk in sinless perfection. There's a difference between victory and sinless perfection, and that's an important reminder. And there's a lot of new believers that don't understand that. You know? They think forgiveness equates to sinless perfection, and then they're just overwhelmed by the fact that they still mess up. They still have

some sinful issues in their lives, and they begin to doubt their salvation—"I wonder if I'm even really saved."

And let me tell you something—I've told you this before; I'm going to repeat it again—to doubt your salvation for those reasons, is to play in the devil's backyard. That is literally, literally playing with the devil because he wants you to live there in that arena of doubt—where you doubt what Jesus did because of what you do.

In other words, he wants you to exalt what you do now above and beyond what Jesus did then on the cross. He wants to make you focus on you so that you forget Jesus. And he's very good at it, very good at it. I have seen Christians struggle with this for years and be tormented, and believe me, Satan has no other plan but to torment you.

So don't go there. Don't go there. You know. Even though I'm telling you that this is a dangerous thing, you need to understand that your struggle with sin is not going to be over until you lay down that fleshly body that you're in right now—that you're wearing right now. When you lay that down, you're going to be free from your sinful nature.

Until that happens, you will continue to struggle with the temptations and the allurements of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life. You will continue to deal with those. Here's the point—you will struggle, but that's the good news. We struggle. We're not giving in; we're struggling. Right?

People say to me, "Why, if I'm saved, why am I struggling with sin?"

"Well, did you struggle before you got saved?"

"No."

I didn't either. I didn't struggle with sin. I just did it, and I didn't care. When I got saved, I started struggling with sin. And listen, that's the battle that we're in as believers. This is not—we're not in paradise yet, you guys, we're not in heaven. We are on a battleground. We are on a battleground, and we are fighting against the fiery darts of the enemy.

And that's why God has given us that full armor that Paul talks about in Ephesians Chapter 6—so that we might put it on and fight the good fight. It's a fight. So, when Christians, when they write to me go, "Why am I still sinning?"

Because you're saved, because you're human, you know, because you're being convicted by the Holy Spirit, and you know that you don't deserve His goodness and grace and you know that you still mess up, but you're struggling to do better.

Here's the great news, you guys—Verse 9, "*9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

What does it take on our part? We just confess. Listen, when the Holy Spirit convicts you, we confess our sins. It's really not rocket science here, guys. We confess our sins. "Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord, I messed up. Forgive me."

It says here, He's "*faithful*." I love that word. I could live on that word as it relates to describing God, I really could. When I'm praising Him I just—for some reason or another, in my own personal praise—I camp on His faithfulness more than any other attribute that God has. I don't know why. I'm just so thankful that He's faithful. You know.

And John says here that "*if* (you) *confess your sins, He is faithful*." That means He's not going to let you down. He's never going to get peevish and kind of go, "Well, I don't know. You've been coming here a lot lately, and I'm not sure that I should let you off the hook this time." No. He's faithful and will forgive us.

But did you notice it also said that He's "*just"* —what does that mean? Well, just is a shortened version of justice. It means that there is justice in His forgiveness, and you think, "Well, what's—where's the justice in Him, in just forgiving us? Because doesn't God have to punish sin?"

Yeah, He does. He has to punish sin. God cannot not punish sin. Sorry for the double negative, but you know what I mean. He can't just let sin go. It has to be punished. Does He punish you? No. Who did He punish? His Son, His Son. His Son got punished for you, and He bore it, and He took it completely. And now He can turn to you in perfect justice and say, "I forgive you." And He can be just to do it.

Now, if a judge today said to a convicted criminal who admitted their wrongdoing, if the judge simply said, "I'm just going to let you go," banged his gavel and said, "You're free to go." Now, that's not justice, because, why? Somebody's got to pay. Right? We call it paying our debt to society. Somebody's got to pay.

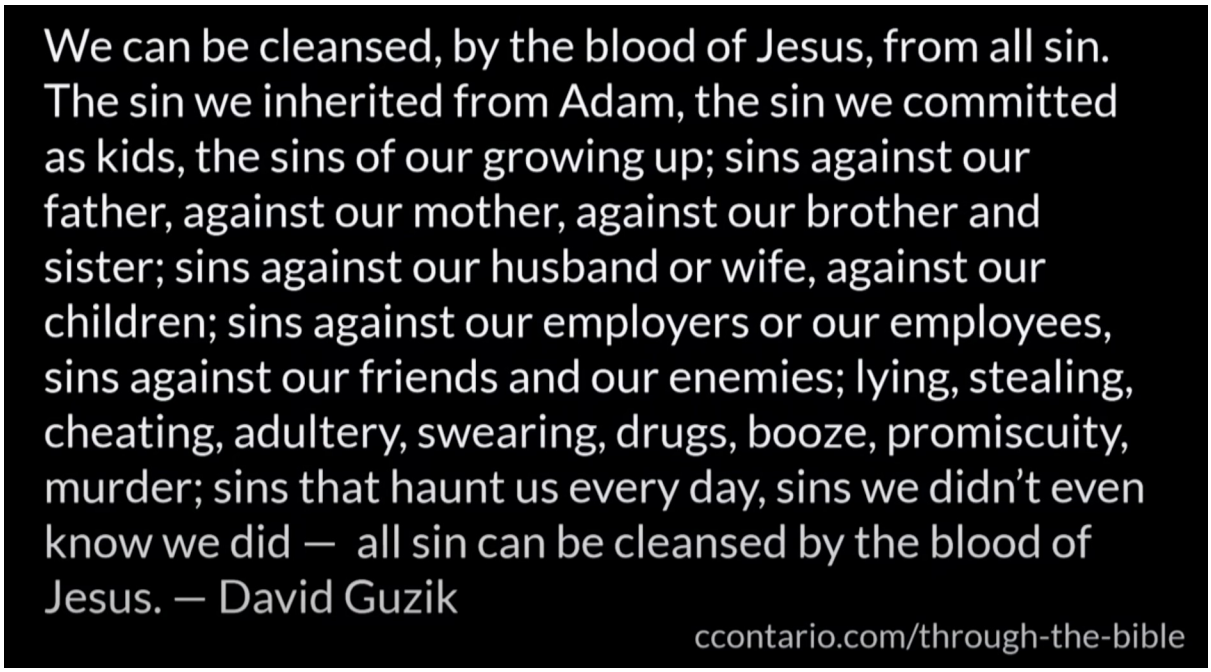
Well, it's the same thing with God. If He's truly just, then somebody's got to pay. Well, somebody did. Jesus did. And so now, "*if we confess our sins, He is* (going to be) *faithful*" every single time you come, even if it's the 100th time in a day that you came and said, "Please forgive me, Lord, I messed up again."

"*He is faithful and* (He is) *just, and* (He will) *forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness*." Do you ever have to go back to that verse and see if it still says "all?"

"You know, Lord, I've really been messing up a lot, so I got to go back here to 1 John 1:9 and see if "all" is still in the text." Because there are people who think that their particular brand of sin was just too much for God to deal with. Seriously, I've had people say to me, "Pastor, you don't know what I've done."

I know, that's true, but I know what He did. I know the sacrifice that He gave. I know the death He died, and my Bible says that if you come to Him, He will cleanse you from all sin. Let me show you a quote from my brother, David Guzik. I love this. He says:

(slide)



"We can be cleansed, by the blood of Jesus, from all sin. The sin we inherited from Adam, (yep) the sin we committed (as children) as kids, the sins of our growing up; sins against our father, sins against our mother, against our brother and sister, sins against our husbands or wives, against our children; sins against our employers or our employees; sins against our friends and our enemies;

lying, stealing, cheating, adultery, swearing, drugs, booze, promiscuity, murder; sins that haunt us every day, sins (that) we didn't even know we did— all sin can be cleansed by the blood of Jesus."

So, there you go. All means all, and that's all, all means.

Final statement in this Chapter, Verse 10 is kind of a restatement. He says, "[10]*If we say we have not sinned,* (and again, that's the definition of walking in darkness), *we make him out to be a liar*, (we basically say God is a liar. Why? Because God said that we're sinners) *and his word is not in us*."

Bottom line—bottom line, people—sin never needs to be a hindrance to your relationship with God. Did you hear me? You need to hear me because satan will try to convince you of the very opposite of what I just said. Sin doesn't have to be a hindrance to your relationship with God. I know that sin makes you feel guilty. I know that it makes you feel condemned. I get that.

But you need to understand, before God, you are not guilty and you are not condemned even though you feel that way. And what makes it so difficult today is that we live in a culture where our feelings have trumped the Word of God. And we deal with that all the time.

I deal with that all the time with people that I talk to. I've dealt with it in my own life. There's something that I know that I know that I know in my mind is true, but my feelings say the opposite. And so here you mess up, you do something horrible, you do something you never thought you'd do, and you feel shame and guilt and condemnation, and you begin to withdraw from the Lord because of that shame and guilt. You actually pull away.

You stop going to church. You stop reading your Bible. You stop praying. You break fellowship because of your feelings—because of your feelings. Listen, when we mess up, we need to do what God's Word tells us to do, and we need to hold tightly to His promises.

And the first promise is the one that we looked at right here in Verse 9, "[9]*If we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness*." Guys, that's a promise. Don't let go. Don't let go of that promise. Know that you are forgiven.

You know people say to me sometimes, they'll talk to me about their guilt and their shame, whatever. And I'll say, "Did you ask God for forgiveness?" They'll say, "Yeah." And then I'll say, "Did you accept it?" Because people think that's

automatic. Listen, you can talk to God and say, “Forgive me, forgive me, forgive me,” and never accept His forgiveness. So, ask yourself the question next time, “Lord, have I accepted your forgiveness?”

“I know that I can't forgive myself” —people say that to me also all the time— “What happens if you can't forgive yourself?” Well, you're not the judge—He is. You're not the one you need to be worried about. The other promise that you need to stand on—I'll show you up on the screen; you all know it:

Romans 8:1(ESV)
“[1]*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

You know what? It doesn't say there's no condemnation for those who never sin. It doesn't say there's, therefore now, no condemnation for those who live a pure life—never mess up.

It says, “*there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” What does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? Means you're trusting in what He did for you on the cross—that finished work for you on the cross. You're trusting in it, and you're not going to let go. Do you understand that by holding fast to these promises—1 John 1:9 and Romans 8:1— that's what it means to take up the shield of faith.

Do you remember what Paul says the shield of faith does in Ephesians Chapter 6? He says, that's what we use to extinguish the fiery darts of the enemy. What are the fiery darts of the enemy?

“You’re scum. God's not going to forgive you. He doesn't love you. You've gone over the edge. That sin is the worst, and He won't forgive you for that. You are condemned.”

Those are the fiery darts that people get thrown at them every day. Here's the question—what are you going to do? Most people crumple into a ball and just— and want to die. But what God wants you to do is take up what He's given you — and that is the shield of faith—and say, “No. 1 John 1:9, I have confessed my sin, and my God is faithful, and He is just because Jesus was punished for me. And I know that I know that I know that He has forgiven me and cleansed me ‘*from all unrighteousness*.’ And furthermore, I know that there is, ‘*therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*.’ And I am in Christ Jesus.” Boom!

That's the shield of faith guys, and we need to take it up. We need to use it, you know, because otherwise the enemy—we're sitting ducks for the enemy. God's given you everything you need, you know, so that you don't crumple into a depressed ball and want to give up. You stand—stand in faith.

That's why Paul says in Ephesians, I want you to stand in the power of God so that after having done everything, you're still standing. After the day of evil comes, you're still standing. Standing in what? The promises of God. Amen?

Let's pray. Jesus, thank You so much for Your Word. Thank You, God, for Your Holy Spirit Who brings the Word to life.

Thank You for the truth. Thank You for forgiveness. Thank You for the means of redemption—that Jesus took my penalty and bore my condemnation that I might be free.

Help us Lord, to stand in that and to always walk in the light. Your Word tells me that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*." And I know, I know that's me. So, help me, Lord, to have the courage when You convict me of sin, to come quickly to the cross and to confess it. To say, Lord, I accept Your verdict. "That was wrong." I accept that, and I ask You to forgive me and to cleanse me of all unrighteousness according to the promise laid down in the Word. And I know that You don't condemn me because Your word promises it. So, I'm going to stand in that.

Thank You for Your word. Thank You for Your grace. Thank You for Your love. We sang tonight, "Your Grace Is Enough," and it's true. Your grace is enough. Be with us, we pray Father God, in Jesus' name. Amen.