

1John 1:5-10 (READ 3-10)

John's introduction finishes with the key point he wants to make

Jesus Christ desires your fellowship or partnership

Partnership with each other

And more importantly – partnership with God

That is a primary reason you have been saved

John finishes his remarks by stating that his writing to us

Makes his joy complete

He writes so that we might have joy

But in the writing his joy is increased to the point of fullness

Here is my point

When you are in a partnership relationship with Jesus Christ

Joy is the natural outcome

When you are in God's will God is faithful to forgive our sins because He has said He will do it

and serving Him you will have joy

The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks the question – What is God?

This is a question that has baffled men for centuries

You see religion has to do with God and people are incurably religious

But can you know God

What is He like – what are His characteristics

And perhaps most important of all – What must we do to know Him

The Westminster catechism tells us that we were made to know God

It calls God – man's chief end

And it defines God this way

God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Now you can read that definition – think about it – memorize it

And while it will help you know about God and His attributes

It does nothing to help you know Him personally

John answers the question What is God but he gives us a simpler definition

God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all

God is light takes us forward but it also reaches back to John's opening

John's desire is for us to have fellowship with each other and with God

If fellowship with God is possible - How is it to be accomplished

A. E. Brooke writes – Having stated that his object in writing is to enable his readers to enter into fellowship, and that the mutual fellowship of Christians leads onwards to that higher fellowship with God in Christ, John proceeds to deduce from the nature of God, the conditions under which fellowship with Him is possible

In this the opening section of his letter

John presents his thesis

He then deals with three related denials concerning sin

And finishes with a call to holiness – which is really what this Letter is about

Why - for without holiness no one will see the Lord

John's thesis is - God is Light

Have you noticed that

No other writer tells us as much about who God really is as John

All of them tell us what He does

Some describe the glory that surrounds Him

But John tells us who God is in His true nature

John 4 – God is Spirit; 1John 1 – God is light; 1John 4 – God is love

And each time John gives us a peak at God's nature

He uses it as a platform to instruct us

God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth

God is light – if we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness the truth is not in us

God is love – the one who does not love does not know God

John doesn't show us God's nature so that we can be theologically sound

John gives us God's nature so that we might understand God

And having that understanding recognize where we stand in our relationship

And draw closer to Him

James Boice called John's three statements – the broadest and most comprehensive definitions of God that can be devised in the human language

John's statement that God is light is reinforced by the OT

Psalm 27 – the Lord is my light and my salvation

Ps 101 – You are clothed with splendor and majesty; He wraps Himself in light as a garment

Isaiah speaking of the Messiah wrote – I will make You a light for the Gentiles, that You may bring My salvation to the ends of the earth

It is the nature of light that it makes things visible

It is also the nature of light that it shows every flaw in the object it is illuminating
I was watching Pawn Stars and they had an expert examining an old item
It was daylight – the lights were on in the store
And yet this expert had a flashlight affixed to her forehead
The owner of the item asked – why the flashlight
The response – So I can see everything – the more light the better the vision
Light shows every imperfection – every flaw – every dirty spot
I saw a newspaper article about movie-stars you don't want to see on HDTV
Apparently the clarity of the picture shows every flaw in their skin and it isn't pretty – or is it – they are no longer pretty
God looks at men with a spotlight of holiness on us and with super HDTV
And we don't look so good
Then light is a symbol of holiness and purity
When John tells us in his Gospel
That men loved the darkness rather than the light
He is stating that men love their sins and reject God
The moral meaning of light has significant overtones for believers
Since God is holy – we should be holy
Since God is pure – we should be pure
Christians should be known for their righteousness
John says if we claim to know God while living a sinful life
We are either deceived or we are lying
Now I don't want anyone who is saved to be afraid that they are not
You will sin – you may even go through seasons of sin
Where the sin is in control and you cannot seem to stop
But those who are truly born again will always return to truth
Not because we are smart – although it is the smart thing to do
But because the Holy Spirit in you never gives up on you
One of the Spirit's duties is to convict the believer of sin and righteousness
And boy is He faithful to that task
But during that period when you are practicing sin
Until you repent and confess your sins
You will not be in fellowship with Christ nor His body
You can go to the potlucks – regularly attend services

Have other believers over to your house - it doesn't make any difference
Fellowship is more than friendship - it is partnership in the Gospel
John writes - If you say you have fellowship with Him and walk in the dark, you're lying
A second use of light is in regards to Jesus and the church
It applies to Jesus exactly as it applies to God
Jesus is the light of the world
And those who are born again are children of the light
Now when Jesus left planet earth He stated
That those who were born again would take His place
Those who are God's children are now the light of the world
Now there is a difference between our being the light of the world
And Jesus being the light of the world
Jesus is holy pure and the source of all good
John writes – In Him was life and that life is the light of men
Jesus very nature is light exactly the same way the Father's nature is light
Now you don't have to live too long to know that we are not by nature light
Stand in a crowded line or get stuck in a traffic jam
You will see the true nature of men and it isn't holy and pure
We are light because Jesus nature now resides in us
And it is His light that now shines forth from us
It is the light of Jesus that reveals the world's darkness
And the world's rejection of Christians is actually rejection of Jesus
Jesus said – because the world hates me it will hate you as well
The truth is
The more you look like God's Son the more rejection you will experience
God is light is a positive statement about God
But with that positive statement John gives us a negative
In God, in Him there is no darkness at all
God is light - positive – God doesn't have any darkness – negative
Now that comparison is significant
Men like light – to survive we need light
So when we hear that God is light – that sounds really appealing
Then John gives us the problem – God has no darkness - not even a little
You see - we have no light – not even a little

God is holy – men are sinful
God is pure – men are corrupt
God is totally holy and totally opposed to that which is sinful
Common sense - and Scripture tell us light and dark cannot be together
So it necessarily follows that
If we are to be in a partnership relationship with God
Then we must be as holy as God
Anything less than perfect holiness just doesn't work

This then leads to John's three denials

Denial number one

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth

Those who were misleading the church separated religion and ethics

They said they were hearing great truths from God

But they were known for their sinful lifestyle

They said they knew God but their lives were unchanged

Now John was addressing Gnostic teaching

But his statement applies to anyone who claims to be a Christian

And takes moral living lightly

Knowing God will always lead to a changed life – it has to happen

F F Bruce – Orthodoxy of doctrine is no substitute for righteousness of life.

In other words – knowing a bunch of facts about God

Doesn't do you any good if you are practicing sin

He doesn't really care how much head knowledge you have

God desires the truth we know be lived out in front of a watching world

We cannot live like the rest of the world and claim to be walking with God

The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes

But that's not all

Having been received the Gospel is the power of God for transformation

We tend to separate justification and sanctification – salvation and holiness

But I would suggest to you that this is a modern phenomenon

The authors of Scripture strongly believed that when you were saved

You were changed

The inward truth of the Gospel is life-changing

That is why Paul could write to the Philippian church

I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ

What is the good work God began – justification

What is the ongoing portion of that same good work that will be completed - sanctification

So John is saying – if you are saved you will be changed

The Gospel changes your destination

And the Gospel also changes your life while on the way to that destination

So you cannot live like the world and claim to have fellowship with God

It just doesn't work that way

But on the other hand

If you walk in the light just as Jesus is in the light

You will have a partnership with God and other believers

Now the fact that John uses the phrase “cleanses us from sin”

Indicates he is not talking about Christian perfection

Rather John is talking about an ongoing pursuit of holiness

Out of which comes regular confession of sin

And increased fellowship with other Christians

Fellowship and confession of sin are to characterize true Christianity

Now you would expect John to write that walking in the light

Gives us fellowship with God

Rather he says we will have fellowship with each other

You see Fellowship with God is visibly demonstrated through fellowship with other believers

The horizontal dimension of your life demonstrates the vertical

How you live in community is an expression of your relationship with God

Be wary of any group which claims to know God

And yet separate themselves from other believers

Denial number two

The second false teaching John addresses has to do with sinlessness

Now there are those today who believe that you can live without sin

They believe in perfect earthly sanctification

John says –

If you believe you have no sin you are deceiving yourself

You may not sin often – but you will sin

Radio pastor John MacArthur was asked if he still had sin problems

He responded that he only had three weaknesses

The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the boastful pride of life

Everything else was under control

The first doctrinal error was that it was possible to have fellowship with God

And continue in sin

The second doctrinal error is that the individual has completely ceased from sinning

To the first error John says

If you tell me you can sin at will and maintain fellowship with God

You are flat out lying

To the second John says

If you believe you don't sin anymore you are deceiving yourself

You just don't know the truth

If you believe you no longer sin then you no longer confess your sins to God

So you have lost fellowship with God and the body of Christ

And you don't even know it

I went to a series of meetings given by a pastor who said that he used to have a problem with anger, but he was now completely sanctified so he no longer became angry

Later his son wrote a book that described an incident in which his father had lost his temper with him

If you say you no longer sin, you deceive yourself

But when you do sin Jesus Christ is your advocate

An advocate is someone who pleads your case before the judge - an attorney

The writer of Hebrews says you can boldly enter the throne room of God

The throne room is where the king holds court

You can boldly enter into the courtroom of God because you already know the verdict

It has been ordained – your attorney has already pleaded your case

Jesus has told the Father – I died for those sins – this person is Your child

So there is no need to be anxious about it

If you repent and confess your sins to God, God will forgive those sins

John uses two words to tell us why God forgives our sins

God is faithful to forgive and God is just to forgive

God is faithful to forgive our sins because He has said He will do it

Isa – Come let us reason together says the Lord, (reason together means – come talk to me) come talk to Me says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white like snow

Jer – I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more
We don't much use the word just any more – it is the root word for justice
It means to do the right thing
How can a Holy God forgive the very thing He hates the most
God is faithful to forgive sins because He said He would
God is just to forgive sins because His Son paid the penalty for our sins
Our sin debt has been paid – that is what our Advocate has told our Judge
Rom 3 – God is both just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus
God punished your sin in His Son Jesus
So don't sin and then say you are walking with God
And don't say you have no sin
Repent of your sin and confess them and God will forgive and cleanse you

The first denial is that you can sin and still have fellowship with God
The second denial is that you can be perfectly sanctified here on earth
And never sin again
The third denial is the most serious of all
It is the claim that one has never sinned
John says that anyone who makes this statement is not only lying
He is accusing God of lying
God states through Paul in Romans – everyone has sinned when God says everyone He means every person who has ever lived– there is not one righteous person
There are many people today who believe they have never sinned
We watched some video presentations on how to share the Gospel
As people on the street were confronted with the Gospel
Some of those being witnessed to claimed that they had never sinned
But then when confronted with specifics they changed
Have you ever lied – yes - have you ever cheated or stolen anything – yes - have you ever had lustful thoughts – yes
Then God considers you a lying thieving adulterer
And they got it

Today many have no idea of sin
They compare themselves to the people they know
And they feel like they're doing ok - worse than some – better than others

John has contrasted the nature of God which is light with the nature of man
And he has begun to show the characteristics of those who walk in the light
It is not enough to claim to be in the light – you must walk in it
As you walk in the light you may be aware that you are being changed
I'm not the man I was 35 years ago when I was born again –
And believe me - that's good
But also - as you walk in the light
You will become increasingly sensitive to the sin that is in your life
And you will have an increasing desire to eliminate all that displeases God
It is impossible for light to fellowship with darkness
And those who try to live for the world and profess Jesus
Are never at peace
Only in Christ alone is there is righteousness joy and peace
When the light of God's truth shines in your heart
You won't be justifying your thoughts and actions
You will say like Isaiah – Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among
a people of unclean lips
Or you will agree with Peter who said – Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man
You will be more aware of your sin than ever
Then as you walk in the light you will be growing spiritually
You will enjoy reading the Bible
You will be going to God with every need including the need of cleansing
Fellowship with God's people will become a greater delight in your heart
And as you walk in the light
You will have a greater desire to serve God
Jesus has bought you from the bondage of sin and darkness
Paid the price for your sin and brought you into the light of God's favor
William Sleeper wrote
Out of my bondage, sorrow and night Jesus I come, Jesus I come
Into Thy freedom, gladness and light; Jesus I come, Jesus I come
Out of my sickness and into Thy health; Out of my need and into Thy wealth
Out of my sin and into Thyself; Jesus I come to Thee
Brothers and sisters – what fellowship has light with darkness
Isn't it time to get your priorities straight

Quit living for yourself and begin to live for God

Come to Jesus – walk in the light