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Letters to Dear Children, Part 2

The Safest Ship Available

Text: 1 John 1:5-10

Three times in the Bible, we read a straight definition of God. All three definitions were penned by John. In John’s gospel he wrote, “God is spirit” (4:24)

The **second** definition is found here in our text. “God is light” (1 John 1:5). The **third** definition is in 1 John 4:8, where John says, “God is love.”

In the previous sermon in this series, I told you that John will talk about pairs of realities in his writings: life and death; bound and free; true and false. Now here: light and darkness.

John will say that when one comes into a relationship with Jesus, who is the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5; 12:46), darkness scatters and we walk in that light.

John will say that once we establish fellowship with God, our walk changes. We can’t say “yes” to the One who *is* light and then walk in the dark!

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil or who mistake darkness for light and light for darkness (Isaiah 5:20). John will say there is a very noticeable difference between light and dark.

In verse 6, in the Greek NT, the word for *fellowship*

is *koinonia*. That word is variously translated *partnership* or *participation* or *communion.*

When we walk in darkness, there is an inevitable result. The opposite is true. When we walk in the light, we have koinonia (partnership, participation) with each other and we walk in forgiveness.

Note with me, the “If” clauses in this text. There are five of them.

1. If we say... (v. 6a)
2. If we walk... (7a)
3. If we say... (8)
4. If we confess... (9)
5. If we say... (10)

Note with me also, the three erroneous claims some were making:

1. We can say we have fellowship with and God and walk in darkness. (v.6)
2. We can say we have no sin but we are deceiving ourselves. (v. 8)
3. We can say we have not sinned but we are make God a liar. (v. 10)  
   John will argue that rhetoric ought to match behavior. *If you say...*ought to result in a corresponding set of actions. Note this same rhythm in 1 John 2:4,6,9 and in James 2:14-18:

***14****What does it profit, my brethren, if someone* ***says*** *he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?* ***15****If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,* ***16****and one of you* ***says*** *to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?* ***17****Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

***18****But someone will* ***say****, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

Some people don’t want to practice serious following of Jesus, but they sure can *talk up* a good faith.

John R.W. Stott:

*Christianity is the only religion which, by emphasizing that God is light, first insists on taking sin seriously and then offers a satisfactory moral solution to the problem of sin. The way to have fellowship with a God who is light is not to deny the fact or effects of sin, but to confess our sins and thankfully appropriate God’s provision for our cleansing.* (The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary)

It is very clear to those of us who are reading his words, that John has a pastor’s heart. He wants these believers to thrive, to grow in their love for Christ. They are his dear children (2:1a, 12, 18, 28). I have a heart like John’s. I love our Crossroads family and I want you to thrive and to grow in your faith and your love for the Savior. This first chapter of John’s letter is filled with first person plural pronouns. John is in “we” mode. John and his readers are clearly part of a faith community. In 2:19, he speaks of those who “went out from us”. The core of John’s message is that God is light. It’s a message as old as Genesis 1, where we saw darkness cover the earth and saw God call light into being. This concept is as old as Psalm27, in which David says, “The Lord is my light and my salvation”.

Be careful here. John is not advocating a one-time experience, a come-to-Jesus moment which gives us deliverance from hell. No, John is saying that a complete life change, a transformative experience, is available to us. John is urging us to go from *talking* about light or *admiring* light to *walking* in it. Verse 7 of our text has a continuous aspect sense to it. As we walk in the light, Christ **keeps cleansing** us.

**Closing**

John is pushing you and me beyond member*ship* or friend*ship*. For John, the *ship* to be prized is fellow*ship.*

That vessel does not fail us. Fellowship with God, through Jesus Christ, enables our fellowship with each other. Take this invitation to fellowship with Christ seriously. **It’s the safest ship available.** Just before I give you a closing invitation from Isaiah, please turn to John’s gospel, chapter twelve. In 12:35-36 we read,

***35****Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.* ***36****While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.*

Just as in John’s gospel, the entrance of Christ into the world (the incarnation) has made all the difference, so in this epistle, the walking in fellowship with God through Christ(transformation) and with each other, makes all the difference.

I close with an invitation issued to OT people in

Isaiah 2:5:

O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Amen