

THE SERMON NOTEBOOK

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SUBJECT: FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

TITLE: WALKING IN THE LIGHT

TEXT: I JOHN 1:5-6

INTRODUCTION. The first three Gospel accounts were inspired by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Person, birth, life, and teachings of Jesus Christ, Luke specifically to give us an accurate historical account of all He did and taught - that is, all he was inspired to write. The fourth Gospel was “written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). The First Epistle of John was written to help us “know that we know Him” (1 John 2:3a). Coming to know Jesus as Savior is not a feeling - Salvation will initiate feelings but feelings will never initiate salvation.

While the First Epistle of John was written to equip the church for its war against a specific heresy of that day (and thus, for similar heresies of our day), it was also written to provide believers with assurance of their salvation. God wants you to know that you know Him! Bob Moore, one of our deacons at Hillcrest Baptist Church, Nederland, Texas, was also the director of a very large youth department. He asked a lady named Kay to give her testimony to the young people one Sunday morning. When she finished he came to my study and told me about it, asking if he could bring her to my study to share her testimony. If Kay were here today I would ask her to share her remarkable story about how God delivered her from the slavery of religion to the freedom of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

To give you a thumbnail account, when Kay and her husband moved to Nederland, she was warned that she was moving in next to “the biggest bunch of Baptists in Nederland.” She was on guard from the moment the neighbor came across to ask if there was anything she could do to help her with her move. For two years she was consistently aware of her neighbors, even though they did not come over and try to “convert her.” She looked for any sign of hypocrisy but her neighbors seemed genuine in their faith. Then their teenage daughter began to date. Kay, determined to prove to herself that these people were hypocrites, decided to watch Billie - young people face a lot of temptations, and since she had never seen anything in the life of her parents, Bill and Joyce that would prove them to be hypocrites, she focused on the daughter’s life.

After watching Billie for several months, this devout Catholic went into her kitchen and fell down on her knees and prayed, “Lord, these people have something I don’t have, and I want what they have.” She was saved because of the living witness of her neighbors, Billie in particular. Now, let’s “fast forward.” Billie is our organist and a Sunday School teacher. One Sunday, Billie walks by me and pauses to tell me that she has been having some doubts about her salvation: *“I don’t have time to talk this morning, but I would like to talk with you about this next Sunday.”* I assured her that I would be available. “However,” I added, “I would like for you to spend a lot of time in First John

this week.” The next Sunday, a radiant Sunday School teacher/organist walked by me with a big smile, “Everything is fine,” she said. There is no one who is so mature or spiritual that he or she does not need the message of the epistle, the divine Author of which is the Holy Spirit. Now, look with me at 1 John 1:5-6.

I. GOD IS LIGHT, 1:5.

“This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”

A. This Is the Message the Apostles Received from Jesus Himself.

1. This Is the Message He Proclaimed.
2. This Is the Message the Holy Spirit Is now Proclaiming through John.

B. Light Here Is a Metaphor for God.

1. No one can define God.
2. Various metaphors, attributes, and titles help us to know Him more intimately.
3. No theme or metaphor used so often in the Bible is insignificant.

C. Light Is a Very Special Metaphor for God.

1. There are many qualities and attributes of light.
2. There are seven basic colors.

There are three primary colors, red, blue, and yellow, and from these colors, all other colors are made. The three secondary colors, orange, purple, and green join with the primary colors to complete the rainbow. The completeness of the rainbow illustrates the completeness of God.

The colors of the rainbow reflect various amounts of light. We also have black and white as well as tints and shades. A tint is any hue with white added to it. A shade is any hue with black added to it. White reflects light. Black absorbs light but does not reflect it. Perhaps it is in these specific qualities that the metaphors are most appropriate. Light reveals, darkness conceals.

For the lost person, finding meaning in this metaphor would be a little like a blind man searching a dark room for a black cat - that is not there in the first place. He may expend a lot of energy but he is going to find nothing. The reason we are able to see God (with spiritual eyes), to perceive Him, and to comprehend Him is that He is constantly revealing Himself to us to enable us to know Him - and to

know that we know Him.

3. The full spectrum speaks of a God Who is complete and absolute.

D. There Are Three Qualities of Light That Make the Metaphor More Significant.

1. There is activity - it is seen and felt.
2. There is luminescence - it is seen.
3. There is warmth - it is felt.

E. Our Salvation Is the Work of God, Who is One is Essence, Three in Personality.

1. The Father planned it.
2. The Son executed it.
3. The Holy Spirit revealed it with power.

II. PROOF OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IS IN THE WAY WE WALK, 1:6.

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

A. True Believers May Have Fellowship With God.

1. The Christian has the privilege of fellowship with the Lord.
2. One may claim fellowship without having it.
3. Every moment you are under the control of the Holy Spirit, or the old sin nature.
4. Here, “If we” introduces the first of five conditional clauses in this section.

There are four class conditions in the Greek New Testament:

1. The first class condition - assumed to be true (if that is a tree - and it is).
2. The second class condition - assumed not to be true (if I were a tree - but I am not).
3. The third class condition - it may be true or it may not (If you stay on your diet you will lose weight and protect your heart - you may, or you may not).
4. The fourth class condition - I wish it were, but it is not - as in 1 Peter 3:17.

The third class condition used here means one may claim fellowship with God, or he may not. Fellowship with God is available to every believer, but many who claim fellowship with Him are lying to themselves and to others. The Scripture here reveals how each person may know whether or not he or she is in fellowship with God. This is critical - you need to know; you had better know!

Remember that no lost person has fellowship with God. A person who is in fellowship with God

is a Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit, a person who is walking in the Spirit, or walking in the light (vs. 7). A person who is out of fellowship with God is either a lost person, or a believer who is dominated by his old sinful nature; that is, he is walking in darkness. His life reflects many of the same patterns and habits found in lost people. He is carnal, grieving the Holy Spirit by sin, quenching the Holy Spirit through the works of the flesh (even good works). He is walking in darkness, even as he claims to be in fellowship with God. You cannot walk in darkness and walk in the light at the same time.

B. Many Do Not Practice the Truth.

1. Lost people cannot practice the truth because they do not know the Truth.
2. Carnal believers are not practicing the truth.
3. Morality is not Christianity.

You do not get to be a Christian by being moral, you are empowered to live a moral life when you receive Jesus Christ. One who is walking according to the flesh, or his old sin nature, may be very hard to distinguish from a lost person - or, he may be very hard to distinguish from a believer who is walking in the light. One can obey the rules, abstain from vices, go to church every Sunday, and still be either lost, or a believer who is not in fellowship with the Lord.

Morality is the byproduct of Christianity, Christianity is never the byproduct of morality, nor is Christianity ever to be equated with morality. God is very clear about this.

4. A pseudo-spirituality professes fellowship with God but does not practice the truth.

This may take on many forms. Some confuse means and results. Good works are the fruit of our salvation, not the root. Good works do not fill us with the Holy Spirit; being filled with the Holy Spirit produces good works. Pseudo-spirituality may impersonate personalities or certain traits seen in others, from dress, to speech, to facial expressions, and even religious clichés'. Pseudo-spirituality leads one to compare his life with others, rather than Christ. He observes others when he should be going to the Word of God. He or she may be deceiving himself with outward expressions of religion, ranging anywhere from simple rituals to asceticism, fasting, abstinence from alcohol or make-up.

5. I am convinced that many who claim fellowship with God today are lying.

I am convinced today that many people are coming to church to be entertained. They want the pastor to entertain them, they want the choir to entertain them, they want the musicians to entertain them. What they don't want to come on their face is repentance before God. We are seeing a lot of what has been called easy believism on the part of people who come to church with one thought in mind: they want to leave feeling good about themselves.

There are two groups of people who are guilty of lying to God and others. First, there are those who

are living in open sin. The young woman who boasts of her immorality to her friend one moment and the next moment she announces to another, "I'll be praying for you." There are those who go to a service on Sunday morning once or twice a month, but they can hardly wait to get to the restaurant to do the family thing, and then take off to the lake or the golf course. Sunday is not a holy day, it is a holiday.

My friend Chuck told me that when he was twenty years he would stay out partying all night and then when friends dared him, he would stagger into church Sunday morning for confession, knowing he was going to do the same thing the next weekend. When Chuck became a born-again believer in Jesus Christ, his great desire was for genuine fellowship with the Lord.

The second group to practice this pseudo-spirituality is made up of people who are always in church, but they do not want to be confronted with sin. I would divide this group. First there are those who seem bored with it all. They are usually in services, but there is not much in their attitude that would attract lost people to Jesus Christ. Then there are those who seem to think that proof of their spirituality is their willingness to set everyone else straight. How often I have seen a senior adult lash out at a youth or young adult over something trivial, and then tell others what "I told him," never stopping to consider how it was perceived from the other side.

The next group is made up of what my sister calls the hhpp people - that is, happy, happy, praise people. They love to sing, wave hands, dance, sway, some of them wearing a down right giddy expression. But don't say anything negative. Condemn sin and you are judgmental, and being judgmental is worse than the sin of witchcraft, immorality, or violence.

Someone recently announced to a large congregation, that Christianity is not about missions, it is about praise. In deep theological terms, that's stupid! Has that person read the Great Commission lately? Why should any Christian drive a wedge between worship and missions or evangelism.

Worship and praise are scriptural, but the Gospel is often confrontational, and today, whether they want to hear it or not, we must emphasize missions, and personal evangelism. We must demand repentance of sin and a separated life. We must encourage people to speak to God through praise, but warn them of the danger of not listening when God is speaking to them.

APPLICATION. I recently spoke with a man who told me he had received Jesus Christ in a monastery when he was a teenager. He said that he prayed and asked Jesus to save him and he will never forget because of a warm feeling that came over him. If this man received Jesus Christ he was saved, regardless of where he was at the time. However, if you want assurance of your salvation, a warm feeling is not the most reliable proof or test. Feelings are subject to change as your circumstances change, but God's Word never changes.

Your salvation is far too important for it to be left to one's feelings. God wants you to know Him, and He wants you to know that you know Him (1 John 2:3). After my young friend told me that he knew he had been saved as a teenager I asked him about Bible reading or Bible study and he

admitted that he does not read the Bible - but he knows he should. I Lord has given us many tests or proofs to help us to know that we know Him. But, if you want to know, and why would you not want to know, get into the Word of God and submit the Holy Spirit as your guide and the Lord will provide the assurance you need.

CONCLUSION. The third class condition in this verse implies a choice that must be made. You may claim fellowship with God, or you may not. You may actually have fellowship with God, or you may not. If you are in fellowship with Him, rejoice in it and ask Him to strengthen your fellowship by filling you with His Spirit.

If you are convicted of the fact that while you are not walking in fellowship with God, it may well be that you are lost and need to be saved. If you have never been born again, fellowship with God is impossible. God sent His Son to die on the cross for you and if you will place your trust in Him, He will give you eternal life, and that includes access to Him (Rom. 5:1 ff) and fellowship with Him.

All Christians who claim to have fellowship with God are not telling the truth. They are lying to God, lying to other people, and yes, lying to themselves. What to they need to do? They need to confess their sin to God, repent, find forgiveness, and restoration to fellowship with God.

INVITATION