

He is Faithful and Just To Forgive

by Chuck Smith

This sermon focuses on the nature of God as revealed in the writings of John, emphasizing that God is light, spirit, and love. It explores the significance of Jesus as the light of the world and the need for believers to reflect His light. The sermon delves into the concept of sin, the necessity of confession, and the role of Jesus as the mediator between God and man. It concludes with a prayer based on Jesus' intercessory prayer in John 17, highlighting His desire for believers to be kept, unified, filled with joy, sanctified, and overflowing with His love.

Scripture: 1 John 1:5, John 4:24, 1 John 4:8, John 1:4, John 1:6, Isaiah 60:19, Revelation 21:23, Romans 3:23, Hebrews 7:25, John 17:9

Topics: "God as Light", "The Role of Jesus as Mediator"

Description

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Transcript

Verse 1 said, that one who was from the beginning, which we heard. So John is now going to tell us what they heard Jesus say about God. Again in verse 3, that which we have seen and heard.

So now he's going to tell you. This then is the message that we have heard of him and we declare it unto you. That's always the way the gospel is imparted.

We hear it and then we tell it. So John is saying this is what we've heard, this is what we're telling unto you. That which we have heard from him.

God is light and in him is no darkness at all. From John's writing, we learn three basic things concerning the nature of God. Here God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

In John 4 24, the gospel of John, God is a spirit. Now Jesus told this to the woman there at Samaria. God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

And then further down in the epistle of John, verse 4 8, he tells us that God is love. God is light, God is a spirit, and God is love. In the gospel of John, chapter 1, John tells us in him, that is in Jesus, was life.

And the life was the light of men. And the light shone in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not, or the darkness did not understand it. There was a man sent from God, his name was John.

He came to bear witness of the light. He was not the light, but he came to bear witness of the light, that all through him might believe. He bore witness of the light, the true light, which lights every man who comes into the world.

So God is light. Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Jesus told us that we are the light of the world, but far different.

Jesus is as the sun shining. The light is within itself, it is flowing forth from the sun. We are more like the moon, which doesn't have any light, but should reflect the glorious light of Jesus Christ.

And as we are walking in a right relationship with him, our lives become a reflection of him. And therein is Christianity really manifested in our reflecting the glorious light of Jesus Christ. Light is connected in the Scriptures with glory.

There is that word Shekinah that perhaps you have heard. It is a reference to God's glory that just emanates out from him, and emanates as light out from him. And so the Shekinah, the glory of God, is that emanating light that comes from God.

We are told in Isaiah 60, 19, that the sun shall no more, the sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. The sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be your everlasting light. John tells us in Revelation 21, 23, that when we get to heaven, in that heavenly city, that the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did light it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

So God's glory emanating from him in heaven won't need a sun, won't need the moon, just the presence of God, the glow, the glory, the Shekinah. Light is also connected in the Scriptures with purity. Darkness is the absence of light, and we always refer to purity as, light as purity.

Then it is also connected with truth. If we walk in the light, the truth, as he is in the light, we have this fellowship. So God is light.

This is the basic message John said. We have heard from him, and we declare unto you. Now he comes to three parallel positions, and they are contrasted.

In 1st John 1 6, if we say that we have fellowship with him, and we walk in darkness, we are lying. It isn't the truth. There are a lot of people who say they have fellowship with God.

It's a glorious thing to be able to say, I live in fellowship with God. That's a wonderful thing. But saying it and having it are often two different things.

I had a uncle who was a, well, he was just a drunken sod. He was foul-mouthed. He was a vile man.

And whenever I would try to witness to him, he would say, well, I believe in God. I'm a Christian. I have fellowship with God.

I say my prayers every night. And I would imagine that every night he would say, now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

And that was about the limit of it. But deceived, thinking that he was in the light, declaring that he had fellowship with God. But such was really not the case.

If we say we have fellowship and we are walking in darkness, that's a lie. It isn't true. But in contrast, if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, then we do have fellowship.

And the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing us from all sin. Paul asked the question of the Corinthians, what fellowship hath light with darkness? What communion has Christ with Belial? You cannot walk in darkness and have fellowship with God. Impossible, because God is light.

And he's surrounded by light. And so if you are in fellowship, in communion with God, you're going to be in the light. You can't be walking in darkness.

In the eighth verse, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Now, this is a reference to the sinful nature that we have all received by birth. Being sons of Adam, we were born in sin and shaped in iniquity.

And if I try to deny that I have a sinful nature, you're only deceiving yourself. The truth is not in you. But if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The forgiveness doesn't come from denial. The forgiveness comes from recognition and confession. And so it's so important that we confess our sins.

Then the third couplet here is, if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. Now, assertions are often made by men concerning fellowship with God.

But if we're walking in darkness, that's a lie. Why? Because light reveals and darkness conceals. And the reason why people love darkness rather than light is because they know that light exposes, light reveals.

And so they walk in darkness in order to try to cover their sin. Interesting, when I was a little kid growing up, downtown Ventura, they had some bars. And my mother would always point out how dark they were inside.

And she would point out the fact that they kept them dark. Because men sort of love darkness rather than light, knowing that light does reveal. If I say I have no sin, that attempt to deny my sinful nature.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, and you, he is made alive who were once dead in trespasses and sins. Who in times past, you were walking according to the course of this world. According to the prince of the power of the air that even now works in the children of disobedience.

And you were all by nature, the children of wrath, even as others. So to try to deny that I have a sinful nature is to, well, it's just, it's a lie. It's not true.

I do have a sinful nature. As I've often said, you don't have to teach your child to lie. They seem to come by that quite naturally.

You don't have to teach him how to throw a temper tantrum. They seem to come by that quite naturally. If they don't get what they want when they want, that old nature will manifest itself.

Be thankful they're as small as they are, or they would tear the crib apart with all of their flailing and their tantrums and so forth. We say, oh, that sweet little beautiful innocent child, isn't that sweet? Oh, yes. But that sweet little innocent child has a sinful nature which will manifest itself in time.

You can be sure of that. We were by nature the children of wrath. Paul tells us in Romans chapter 6 that by one man, sin entered the world and death by sin, so that death passed unto all men for all sin.

He is teaching that Adam is the federal head for man. His sin brought sin into the world, sin that passed unto us for we all sin. When Adam sinned, he lost that fellowship and relationship with God and he could not pass on what he had lost himself.

So as a result of Adam's sin, we sin in him, he acted as a federal head. It's an important truth that Paul is bringing to us there in Romans, because as Adam sinned for us all, and you say, well, I don't think that's quite fair, I don't think that's quite right, you know, that, you know, I have to be responsible for what Adam did in the garden. Well, if you were there, you would have done the same thing.

Don't look so pious. But the fact that he was the federal head, sinned for all, and death passed unto all, even so then, Jesus is the federal head for those who have their faith in him. He is the federal head for those who are righteous.

So if one man's sin can make us all sinners, then one man's righteousness can make us all righteous. And that's why it is so important to hold to the nature of sin in man, that it is by one man's sin that we all became sinners. Your sinning doesn't make you a sinner, it only proves that you are.

If you weren't a sinner, you wouldn't sin, but your sinning doesn't make you a sinner. Stealing a horse doesn't make you a horse thief. If you were a horse thief, you would never steal a horse.

It only proves that you are a horse thief, that the fact that you stole it. If you're not a horse thief, you would never steal a horse. So sinning doesn't make you a sinner.

I sin because I am a sinner. I have that nature of sin in me, a sinful nature. And if I say I don't have it, then I'm deceiving myself, I'm lying.

But in contrast, if we confess our sins, he's faithful, he's just, to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Then he goes a step further. He says, if I say I haven't sinned, so there is that root of sin in me, a sinner by nature.

But if I say that root has never produced any fruit, okay, I mean I have a sinful nature, but I've never sinned. Well, John says, you're making God to be a liar then. Why? Because God's Word says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

So the sinful root has borne fruit and we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Now some may have, you know, progressed further than others, but no matter how far you might progress, you've come short. None of us have attained to the glory of God.

You might attempt to swim to Catalina Island and do all of the preparation necessary, and you might start off, dive into the surf at Newport Beach and start stroking as you're going over to Catalina Island. It may be that you won't get barely past the pier when you just give out and you say, oh, I'm gonna climb into the boat. It may be that you would get maybe halfway across the channel and then you'd get seasick and all and you'd have to climb into the boat.

Well, you've come short. It may be that you would get right at the edge of the harbor in Avalon and you would just totally give out. You can't raise your arm and another stroke.

You've still come short. Now you see, there are those that come closer, perhaps, but we've all come short. There is none righteous, no, not one.

But the glorious thing is that when we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Job, we're very familiar with his story and the miseries that he went through as Satan was putting him through the ringer, trying to break him, trying to prove his point and how that Job's friends so totally misunderstood the calamities that he was experiencing, came to comfort him but ended up condemning him. They reasoned that no man would go through all of the hardships that Job was going through unless he was guilty of horrible sins.

And they kept trying to make him feel guilty. They kept trying to get him to confess his sin, whatever it is. And one of his friends suggested, Job, just get right with God.

You're hiding it and you're a hypocrite. Get right with God, Job, and things will be okay. And Job answered him.

Well, let's turn to chapter 9 of Job and look at Job's answer to this friend who told him, just get right with God and things will be okay with you. Job has a classic answer for him there in chapter 9. Then Job answered and he said, I know it is so of a truth, you know, if I could be justified before God things would be okay. But how can a man be just with God? If he will contend with him? He cannot answer him one in a thousand questions.

God should cross examine me. I couldn't answer one in a thousand of the questions. For he is wise in heart and mighty in strength.

And who has hardened himself against him and has prospered? Oh, you can harden yourself, but you sure won't prosper. Who removes the mountains and they know not? Who overturns them in his anger? Which shakes the earth out of her place and the pillars thereof tremble? Who commands the sun and it rises not and he seals up the stars? Which alone spreads out the heavens and treads upon the ways of the sea? Who makes Arturus, Orion, and the Pleiades and the chambers of the south? Who does great things past finding out? Yea, and wonders without number. Lo, he goes by me and I see him not.

He passes also, but I perceive him not. Behold, he takes away and who can hinder him? Who shall say unto him, what are you doing? If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him. How much less shall I answer him and choose out my words to reason with him? Job just get right with God.

Job says, how can I? He's aware of the greatness of God, the vastness of God. He's spread out the heavens. He's put the constellations out there and he passes.

I can't see him when he passes by and you say, get right with him? How can I? Whom though I were righteous, yet I would not answer, but I would make supplications to my judge. In other words, I wouldn't try to justify myself, I'd just beg for mercy. If I had called and he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice? For he breaks me with a tempest and he multiplies my wounds without cause.

He will not suffer me to take my breath, but he fills me with bitterness. If I speak of strength, he is strong. If I speak of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead? If I justify myself, my own mouth will condemn me.

If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet I would not know my soul, I would despise my life. This is one thing therefore I said, and he destroys the perfect and the wicked.

If the scourge slays suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked and he covers the faces of the judges. Therefore, if not where and who is he? Now my days are swifter than a post.

They flee away and they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships and as an eagle that hastens to the prey. If I say I'll forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness and comfort myself.

I am afraid of all of my sorrows. I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent. If I be wicked, then why then I labor in vain? If I wash myself with snow water, make my hands ever so clean, yet shall you plunge me in the ditch and my own clothes will abhor me.

For, and here's the problem, he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him and that we could come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both. Job sees this as a problem.

He sees God as infinite. He sees the power of God. He sees the awesomeness of God and he sees himself.

He sees himself in the light of God. Who am I? I'm nothing. How can I ever, you know, approach God? How can I ever plead my cause before God? He is so awesome and here I am just nothing.

And the problem is, he said, there's no daysman between us who can lay his hand on us both. The gap between an infinite God and finite man is so great that you would need someone who could stand between the two and lay his hand on both. One who could touch God, one who could touch me.

I need a bridge. I need a daysman. I need a mediator because God is so vast that it would be impossible for me to try and defend myself before him.

I need a daysman. And isn't that exactly what the Bible tells us that Jesus is? He is that daysman that Job was calling out for. Job recognized that he needed.

Jesus can lay his hand upon God for he was God. He came from God. In the beginning was the Word.

The Word was with God and the Word was God. As John opens the epistle, that one who was from the beginning with God, who we have seen, whom we have touched, he could touch God because he came from God. He is God.

But he became man. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld his glory.

We touched him. And thus he can touch me as the Son of Man. He can touch God as the Son of God.

And so we do read there's one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. The answer and God's only answer. By which we can be just before him.

There is a very powerful movement in the church today. And unfortunately, it's in many evangelical churches. And it's called the emergent church.

And there are dangerous, dangerous teachings in the emergent church. They have a philosophy that says almost all roads lead to God. So if you're a good Buddhist, if you're a good Muslim, then God will receive you.

Making Jesus not necessary for us to reach God. And it is a, it is a movement that is gaining strength. It's on its way up right now.

Like all others, it will soon fizzle and fall. But in the meantime, many people get sucked up in the movement. And it is tragic what the people who are leading this movement are saying.

It's sort of like, you remember when that positive confession movement was so strong and, and it what happens is that everybody tries to outdo the other guy and, and get more radical. And they get more and more and more radical until they're just way out in left field. And, and so if they only say or parrot what other guys are saying, then nobody pays any attention.

So they've got to get the attention. So they, they make even a more radical statement. And everybody's shocked.

But then, you know, someone else will come along and outdo them. And that's the phase they're in right now, of trying to outdo each other in radical statements. Denying that Jesus is the only way.

Denying that he is the only way by which finite man can reach the infinite God and be justified before him. As Hebrews 7.25 tells us concerning Jesus, wherefore, he is able also to save them unto the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them. Jesus is interceding for you and for me.

He can touch me. He became man. He experienced the limitations of a human body.

He understands what it is to be tempted. And he can touch me. How often in the New Testament we read that Jesus had compassion on them.

And he looks at us and he understands you and he has compassion on you. That makes him a great high priest for us. Because he understands me.

He knows my weaknesses. He knows the things that I'm going through. He understands.

But also he was pure. He was holy. And he can touch God.

And so he lays his hand on me. He lays his hand on the Father and he says, Father, have mercy and forgive him. Lay the charges that you have against him on me.

I bore them on the cross. That's what the gospel is all about. And what a terrible thing it is to water the gospel down and suggest that you don't necessarily need Jesus Christ to be justified before God.

That is a fallacy. That is a lie from Satan. Paul asked the Romans, who is he that condemns? He said, it is Christ who has died.

Yea, rather is risen again. And as even is at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us. Christ the great intercessor.

Christ the mediator. Christ the days man. The one who can put you in touch with God.

He is the bridge by which we come to God. It's fortunate for us that John in his gospel recorded one of the prayers of Jesus. One of the prayers of Jesus for us.

I think of that night that Jesus was having this supper with the when Judas went out to make the arrangements of betraying him to the high priest. Jesus was saying things that were troubling them. He was telling them that he was going to go away from them, but where he was going, they couldn't come now.

And Peter was upset and he said, why can't we come now? I'm ready to die with you. Jesus then predicted that before the rooster would crow, he would deny him three times. But he had told him earlier that evening, Peter, Satan has requested for you.

He wants to sift you like wheat. He wants to grind you. And when you are converted.

Well, Jesus left out the important one. Jesus said, I have prayed for you. And when you are converted, strengthen your brothers.

Satan is after you. He's wanting to get you. He wants to grind you, Peter, but I prayed for you.

Wouldn't you love to hear Jesus say, you know, I know you're going through a hard time, but I'm praying for you. You know, a lot of times people call and say, oh, pastor, pray for me. Well, yes, I'll be glad to pray for you.

And I do pray for you. But how about Jesus praying for you? And he said, I've prayed for you. Satan wants you.

He's going to sift you like wheat, but I've been praying for you. And when you're converted, in other words, you're going to come through this, strengthen your brothers. Well, John then recorded what Jesus is praying for us.

In John 17, he records the prayer of Jesus. He said, I pray for them. That is those who are going to come to believe in me through the witness of the disciples and apostles.

I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them, which you have given me for they are yours. This is what he's praying for you.

Listen. Holy father, keep through your name, those whom you have given to me. Father, keep them through your name.

Jesus is praying that you might be kept. Secondly, that they may be one as we are one. Lord, let there be unity.

Let them be one. Oh, how the Lord wants unity within the church, within the body of Christ. Even father, as we are one, how the Lord hates divisions.

Those who cause division among brethren, it's an abomination unto God. Let them be one Lord. Then he prayed that they might have my joy fulfilled in them.

The joy of the Lord. Jesus wants you to have it. That you might be filled with his joy.

And then Jesus prayed, keep them from evil. His desire is that you might be kept because he knows the destructive power of evil. As I've often said, when God laid down the law, he did not forbid you doing one decent thing.

You have all kinds of liberty to do things that are right, to do things that are decent, to do things that are good. He didn't prohibit you from doing one good thing. But the things that God did prohibit are things that will bring pain, sorrow, suffering, misery.

And so, because he loves you and wants you to have his joy, he knows that these things will rob you ultimately of that joy. They will leave you feeling miserable and with a guilty conscience and just filled with sorrow. And so, he wants to keep you from evil.

Evil. And he's praying, Father, keep them from evil. He's also praying that you might be sanctified through his truth.

That is, cleansed through his truth. Set apart, made holy. And then his request is that the love wherewith you have loved me may be in them and I in them.

Lord, let them be just overflowing with love. The love that you have for me, let them experience that love. Let it be in them and let me dwell in them.

These petitions of Jesus for you are things that I think you should go home and read the 17th chapter of John and just underline the petitions and know that this is what Jesus is praying for you. Now, you know, I have all kinds of confidence in the prayers of Jesus. I'm glad he's praying for me.

It gives me great consolation to know that he's praying for me and it's good to know what he is praying. This is his desire for you. It's his desire for me.

Father, we do thank you that you do love us. You have drawn us to yourself. You've given us access to the throne of grace.

You've sent your son that he might be a daisman, that he might stand between us and lay his hand upon us both, that he is the great mediator. And Lord, we just thank you that we can come to you tonight through Jesus Christ and we can confess our sins knowing that you are faithful and that you are just and that you'll forgive us our sins and you'll cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Lord, there are some here tonight who have erred from the path.

They have, like the church in Ephesus, grown a little cold. They've left their first love and they've strayed away, Lord, and they're beginning to experience some of the consequences of their falling. Lord, help them to realize that you understand, that you know, and if they will just but confess their sin, you are faithful and you are just and you'll forgive that sin and cleanse them and how they need that cleansing tonight, Lord.

And so we pray that you will draw them unto yourself, that you might do that work in their hearts and that you might fill them, Lord, with your joy and that you, Lord, might just keep them from evil and let them know and be overflowing with your love. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to pray for you tonight, especially if you are one of those that have gotten trapped in some evil.

The Lord is so anxious to restore you. Jesus is interceding for you, praying that you will be kept from evil, so we would encourage you tonight to agree with his prayer. These pastors are here to minister to you.

Maybe some of you are sick tonight. Jesus wants to touch and heal you. Maybe some of you are discouraged.

He wants to lift you up and encourage you tonight. Maybe you're going through some financial problems. He understands and he wants to work in those areas.

He loves you. You're his child, and he's very concerned with you, so we would encourage you to give him that opportunity to do those things that he's longing to do for you tonight. As soon as we're dismissed, come on down and meet with these pastors down here.

Let them pray for you and receive tonight the touch of God and the blessings of God that he's desiring to bestow. I will serve you because I love you. You have given life to me.

I was nothing until you found me. You have given life to me. Heartaches, broken people, ruined lives are why you died.

On Calvary your touch is what I long for. You have given

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