

Building on Basics

by Colin Anderson

Colin Anderson's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's holiness and the necessity of living in fellowship with Him through Christ's cleansing grace.

Duration: 47:27

Scripture: Psalm 92:10, Proverbs 9:10, 1 John 1:5, 1 John 2:15, 1 John 3:4, 1 John 3:8, Revelation 2:18

Topics: "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses a situation where his son had to appeal to his superiors due to problems with an essay. The speaker questions whether anyone in the school is concerned about ethics and righteousness. He emphasizes the need for repentance and confessing sins to have forgiveness and cleansing. The speaker also references the Apostle John's clear statements about sin and righteousness, urging the audience to live in a black and white world where moral issues are precise and clear.

Transcript

I'm going to ask you to turn with me, please, to the first epistle of John and the first chapter. The first epistle of John and the first chapter. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have beheld or gazed upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the word of life.

And the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. And what we've seen and heard, we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

And this is the message we have heard from him, and announce to you that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not enough.

My little children, I'm writing these things to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. And he himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commands. That's as far as we'll read this afternoon. I have a son who has just begun to teach high school in Canada, and during his first term of teaching, a student submitted an essay, a very well written essay, on the Hitler regime in Europe, and during the last war.

In the essay, the student made statements about Hitler that showed that he believed that Hitler had done a lot of damaging things, hurtful things, to many people. But, in it, he made some statements such as that Hitler had done his country some good, that he had raised it to a place of economic power, and that it had, under his influence, political clout in Europe. As a result of that essay, both he and my son were accused of anti-Semitism.

The accusation was not true, but was promoted by jealousy. And in the course of the problems that resulted from this essay, and my son having marked the essay as being a good essay, as a result of that, my son had to appeal to his superiors. And in the process of doing so, he came to the conclusion that they were more concerned about the politics of the situation than they were the ethics that involved.

And to his advisor, he said, is no one concerned about the ethics of this matter? Is no one concerned any more in this school about righteousness? Where are the standards? And his advisor said to him, well, I don't know about you, but I don't live in a black and white world. Let me ask you, brethren, do you and I live in a black and white world? The apostle John did. Issues were clearly stated.

Sin was sin. Righteousness was righteousness. And John encouraged his readers to live in a black and white world, where issues are clear, where there is no gray, where there is no mixing of morals and standards, but everything is precise and clear.

Look at how John speaks in the 15th verse of the second chapter. Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Isn't that clear? I think that's very clear. Chapter 3, in verse 4, everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. Again, a very clear statement.

Verse 8, the one who practices sin is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil. You and I, as believers, are called to walk in the light, and one of the simplest statements that is made in the reading that we had earlier on in this session here appears in verse 5, and I want to think about that with you for a few minutes.

And here is the statement, that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. Now, it's a very, very clear statement, isn't it? Light surely is a synonym for holiness. What John is saying is that nothing that belongs to the world of darkness and of sin has any place in the presence of God.

It has no proximity to him, no nearness to him. He must of necessity, because of his holy character, expel it from any association with himself. What is God's holiness? When we read that God is light, what exactly is meant by a statement like that? What is God's holiness? I find holiness very difficult to define.

I think we all have some concept or understanding of what it is. It might help us to think that there is a difference between holiness and righteousness, as far as God is concerned. Holiness, we might suggest, has to do with his heart, his motivation, his thoughts.

Righteousness has to do with his hand, his judgment. Holiness is that characteristic of God which, if one may so speak of God in this way, causes him to shrink away from sin. Righteousness is that which causes him of necessity to judge sin wherever he finds it.

Holiness has to do with what God is. Righteousness more with what he does in relation to sin. Holiness is that which sets him apart, and separates him, and elevates him above all comparison.

When the children of Israel were redeemed, they learned to sing this song unto the Lord in the day of their redemption, and they came across the Red Sea, you remember, and they sang this song to the Lord in that day. Among other things that they sang were these words, Who is like unto thee among the gods, O Lord? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders? That's the very essence of worship, isn't it? Being occupied with what God really is in himself. Not merely what he has done.

What he has done simply brings us into his presence to realize who he is. His acts in creation and in redemption are intended to bring us to know him in his true character, and that brings us to worship him. And how can we compare him with anyone? He is unique.

Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Or, we think of Hannah's words, there is none holy as the Lord. We cannot compare our God with anyone. He is unique, he is supreme, he is above all.

That is part of his holiness, his separation from, his superiority to, all that appears around us, and all that we are in ourselves, and all that any member of creation, including the highest angels, could ever be. He stands supreme above them all, unique in his holiness, and this is our God. Holiness is that which radiates from God, I would suggest, surrounding him like an immense halo, or like a magnetic field repelling everything that is inconsistent with it.

You remember that when he saw Moses approaching, he called to him, Moses, Moses, do not come near here, remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. Holiness is that which must produce a consistent reaction in all of those who draw near to him. Nadab and Abihu, you'll remember, had to learn this, that they had to be consistent with the character of God when they drew near to him.

They took their fire pans, you remember, and after putting fire in them, they placed incense on them, and they offered strange fire before the Lord. That which he did not command, the scripture says, the fire came out from the presence of the Lord, and consumed them. His word was this, by those who come near me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.

That is the unchanging word of God. The situation under different circumstances was repeated in the church. Ananias and Sapphira had forgotten the lesson that had been taught by Nadab and Abihu.

In their hypocrisy they agreed together to do what they had not thoroughly considered, perhaps, they were doing. They had agreed together to lie to the Holy Spirit, and they fell down dead in the presence of God. The church of Corinth had to learn this lesson.

They came together to remember the Lord, a holy Lord. They were eating and drinking unworthily. They were not unsaved people, sitting down at the Lord's Supper.

They were believers sitting down at the Lord's Supper, and they were the ones who were eating and drinking in an unworthy manner. Of course, we all understand that none of us is worthy to come into the presence of God. That is made very clear to us in this first epistle of John, and in the first chapter.

If it were not for those precious words that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin, how could we draw near to a holy God? But by the grace of God we may. But they were careless in relation to that grace, and they dishonored the law they professed to worship. For this cause, some are weak and sickly among you, and some sleep.

Have we learned our lesson today? We might say, well God doesn't do those things today. Maybe not. But as I understand the Bible, and surely as you understand it, our God is consistent with Himself.

He is immutable, which means He's unchanging. He feels just the same way about hypocrisy in the churches today, as He did the church at Corinth. He feels just the same way about those who profess to worship Him, and serve Him, but in reality are serving their own interests.

He feels just the same way today, as He did then. When we come together in the name of the Lord Jesus, we come into the presence of our holy God. We ought always to remember that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

The second point I want to make from this passage is not only that our condition is challenged by this verse, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all, and it certainly does challenge where we are, does it not brethren? It makes me ask, as I bow in His presence in the privacy of my own room, how do I stand in relation to this holy God? Redeemed it is true by the blood of Christ, but have I understood John's message? Have I balanced the grace of God with the fear of God? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. God has put us in a black and white world. He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

The second thing in this passage then is not only that our condition is challenged, but our Savior is manifested to us. Verse 1. That which was from the beginning. Now, that is obviously a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ, for it goes on to speak of Him as the Word of Life.

He is spoken of here as from the beginning. Now, I suppose that that calls our minds immediately back into eternity, and we say, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And so, when we read these words, that which was from the beginning, we naturally think of those words first of all.

And I would not quarrel with that, except to say that we must make allowance for the possibility that John may not have meant that. It is true that he might be taking us back to John chapter 1 and verse 1. On the other hand, he does use that term from the beginning, not to refer to eternity, because, for example, look at chapter 3 and verse 8. There he says the devil has sinned from the beginning. That does not mean that the devil is eternal, but it's saying that from the beginning he was a sinner.

That it is part of his character, his nature, as the devil, since the time he became the devil. I'm not speaking about when he was Lucifer. We're speaking about him as the devil here, and from the beginning he has had this one characteristic that he sins, and he's committed to a pathway of sin.

So, it certainly does not mean eternity in that verse. In John chapter... So, it certainly does not mean eternity in that verse. In John chapter 15 and verse 27, the Lord Jesus said, you will bear witness also because you have been with me from the beginning.

Now, clearly our Lord was not suggesting that they had been with him from eternity, but John, the author of this epistle that we're reading, is saying that from the beginning of his ministry they had been with him. They asked Jesus as to who he was. Jesus said, that which I have been saying to you from the beginning.

Now, what do all these passages suggest to us when we get that phrase from the beginning? Well, whether we go back into eternity and say that John meant in the beginning was the word, or whether we go back to the beginning of Christianity, which I'm suggesting may be the meaning, and don't fight with me if you believe the other. I don't wish to fight with you, but I'm just suggesting to you that either may be true. Now, whichever way we take it, what it's saying when it says from the beginning is that he is unchanging.

That's what it's teaching us about the Lord, that whether we go back to eternity, he is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Or whether we simply go back to the time when John and the other apostles came to know him, that he had been consistently the same, and that he was still the same now, even though he descended back to glory. And John was saying, our saviour is immutable, he is ever consistent with himself, he is eternally unchanging.

So, the one we're introduced to you, or the one we're introduced to, I should say, in the first verse of the first epistle of John, is the son of the father, the one who is one with God, who is light, the one who is ever consistent with himself. And yet the marvellous thing is that this same God is visible and approachable. That's the point that John makes, isn't it? He brings us in these first verses into a great intimacy.

He invites us to come into a fellowship that he and the other apostles had thoroughly enjoyed when the Lord Jesus was here on earth. You see, we have a tendency to look back over 2,000 years and to say, I wish I could have been with him then, as the hymn writer puts it. But John says you don't need to be with him then.

We have been with him. He says he is the one that we, the apostles, have heard. And what we've seen with our eyes, and what we have gazed upon, for the word that he uses there is very strong, it isn't merely a glance, or a look, but it's an intent gaze.

That one whom we have gazed upon, and notice this brethren, our hands have handled what intimacy is there. The word of life, yes, we heard him, we saw him, we gazed intently upon him, and our hands were permitted to touch him, and even to handle him. This is the life that was manifested, and this is the life that we, by the power of the Spirit of God, are declaring unto you.

And our purpose in declaring this wonderful revelation that took place, beginning at Bethlehem, and ending at Bethany when he ascended back to glory, this wonderful revelation that took place during that time, which we enjoyed, we are now sharing with you. And you, by the Spirit of God, may enter into that same fellowship that we enjoy. That we're not in an exclusive class as the apostles, but that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Isn't that thrilling? That is just amazing to me. I confess I find myself like a little child, paddling on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. If you were to ask me, do you know the ocean, little boy? I might say, yes, I know

the ocean, and yet how much would I really know? So vast, so immense, so wonderful is that ocean, and yet the marvel is that I can put my little feet into it, and I can have a relationship with that ocean without fear.

And that's the marvelous relationship we have with the God who is light, in whom there is no darkness at all. And let us remember that when he became so intimate with men, so close to men and women, he never lost that character. And ever, and now, and then it came out as he was moving among men and women.

We think of the example when he was in John chapter 4 with the woman of Samaria. Go call thy husband, and come here. Oh my, her mind, her heart is open.

She sees herself standing in the presence of a holy representative of God. I perceive that you are a prophet, she says. He goes on graciously to speak to her words of eternal life, and yet she's not struck down dead.

She is not obliterated, she is not removed, and yet the God who is light is standing there revealing to her exactly who she is. She cannot hide in his presence. Grace is there to bring him near, and holiness is there to expose her to herself as he sees her to be.

She cannot hide in his presence. You'll remember that Peter, after that miraculous catch of fish, experienced the same thing. He had been journeying with the Saviour.

Perhaps had become a little casual, a little used to his presence. But after this demonstration of the mighty power of God, he falls down at the Saviour's feet. Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.

And yet, where does he fall? Does he run away and call out as he goes, leave me alone, you are holy? No, he falls down at his feet, and yet says something that stands as a contradiction to what he was doing physically, by falling at his feet. Depart from me, for I am a sinful man. Sensing on the one hand the grace of the Saviour that would permit him to fall at his feet, and on the other hand his intense holiness that would expel all that was evil from his presence.

Isaiah had to learn this lesson in the service of God. As far as we can tell, in those first five chapters he had already been acting for God, and speaking forth his word. But one day he was drawn into the presence of God, and saw him as he had never seen him before.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, and the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that I am a man of unclean lips. No wonder he uttered such words. These things spoke Isaiah when he saw his glory.

Who is the his in that verse? It's the Lord Jesus that is being referred to. These things said Isaiah when he saw his glory. Our God is light.

Yet he has become visible to us. He has become approachable, and we may have fellowship with him on two conditions. First, I am assuming that we know that the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

Obviously it must be based on that condition, for there are two things that I learn in the light. One is the intense holiness of God, and the other is, along of course with that intense holiness, I learn my sinfulness. That's the other side of that coin, isn't it? So one thing I learn is who God is, and who I am, and the other

thing I learn is that God has made provision for a sinner like me to be in his presence.

The blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin. But apart from that, there are two conditions I would suggest to you that we must fulfill if we're to know real, vital, living fellowship with the Lord. You see, we can be in fellowship with him positionally, and yet in our condition we can be far away from knowing the reality of that fellowship.

One condition is that we pay attention, deep, committed attention, to the word of God. There is no way we can know the mind of God or enter into God's thoughts without attention, serious, devoted attention to his word. Let me read to you from Proverbs chapter 2. My son, if you will receive my sayings and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom and incline your heart to understanding.

If you cry out for discernment, you lift up your voice for understanding. If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. You see, without that, in practical ways, without that, I will not enjoy the fellowship that I have.

For that fellowship is a fellowship of exploring, of getting to know, of plumbing the depths of the grace of God, and getting to know that God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. That's the first condition, that I pay attention to the word. And the second condition was mentioned to us this morning very forcefully, and that is there must be obedience to that word, absolute commitment to what I read, that I may obey that word.

He who has my commandments, said our Savior, and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will disclose myself to him. Do I want to know that? Can I cry out with the Apostle Paul that I may know him? Then I must pay attention to his words, and I must be committed, absolutely committed, to obedience to his word.

John says in his epistle, the one who says, I've come to know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. We live in a black and white world, where the issues are absolutely clear. The third point I want to make this afternoon is, that our position is clarified by John's teaching.

First of all, there are three unchristian stands made here. You'll read them in verse 6, verse 8, and verse 10. If we say, verse 6, if we say, verse 8, if we say, verse 10, the first one is, we have fellowship with him.

We're in fellowship. And we use those words too easily, don't we? We're in fellowship. Are we? Who are we in fellowship with? Sometimes we merely mean, we're in fellowship with the other Christians.

We must remember that if that fellowship is a true Christian fellowship, it involves us in the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Well, if we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, then what does he say about us in verse 6? We lie. We do not practice the truth.

What does John mean when he talks about darkness? First of all, let me suggest that darkness speaks of sinful behavior. You remember in John chapter 3, we have that clear statement that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. So, darkness stands for sinful behavior, but it also stands for confused conduct.

Well, remember that in John's gospel again, in chapter 12, the Lord says, he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. And in Ephesians 5, it speaks about the believer, and he is not to participate in the unfruitful works of darkness. The world we live in is a sinful world.

It's a confused world. It's a world of darkness, but more sinister. Darkness speaks of satanic influence.

We wrestle not against the rulers of the darkness of this world, but against principalities and powers. I'm sorry I misquoted that. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.

That's our conflict. That's satanic in character, that darkness. Then, darkness does not only speak of evil and confused conduct, fruitless living, and satanic influence.

It is also used in the scripture to speak of a hypocritical stand, or shall we say, a hidden motivation, that will one day be brought to light. It could be not only an evil motivation, it could be a good motivation. The apostle says in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 5, judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and then shall every man have praise for God.

What was not known to you, and not known to me about you, will then be revealed, and my misjudgment will be corrected. The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness. Not necessarily evil things, but things that it's impossible for us to perceive now.

When we come to God, we come to God who sees things as they really are. Who sees me not as I may impress others, if I do, when I'm preaching, but he sees me as I really am. And that's the person that he will deal with at the judgment seat of Christ.

That's the person I will turn out to be, the person I really am, not the person I appear to be to you. The second thing is that some people say we have fellow, not only say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, but the second thing in verse 8 is that they say we have no sin. Well, they're deceiving themselves, possibly no one else.

Those who know them best would know different. Why do they say that, that we have no sin? Perhaps it's a false interpretation of verse 7, where it says that the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. They might take from that that the blood of Jesus Christ eradicates sin in man, and that of course is not what it's teaching.

Or it might be, and I think currently we're beginning to see some literature along this line in the Christian bookshelves, an overreaction to the statement, I'm only a sinner saved by grace. I know we could have some quarrel with that statement theologically. We sing it heartily, and I join in it, I'm only a sinner saved by grace, but it's not really the whole truth, is it? I'm not only a sinner saved by grace, I'm a saint.

I'm a child of God, and so are you. And if I cling to that aspect of my life, and say that I'm only a sinner saved by grace, I will never enter into that which God intends for me to enter into. I will never understand the hope of his calling.

I will never realize what it means to be called saints. So I understand when people have a quarrel with a verse like that, I'm only a sinner saved by grace. And in an overreaction to that, we're getting some who teach today that the evil nature in the child of God is virtually eradicated.

Well it's not so, and anyone who says it, says John, is deceiving himself, and the truth is not in him. Anyone who says, verbally, we have not sinned, makes God a liar. Makes him out to be a liar.

Of course it doesn't mean that he turns God into a liar. No one can do that. No one can change God's character, but it means that he makes him out to be a liar, because God says exactly the opposite.

His word makes it very clear to us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and anyone who says we have not sinned makes God a liar. It may be an attempt to write off the inconsistencies in our lives. We want to live a holy life, we find we're not being successful, so we're left with two alternatives.

Either we simply say, I can't make it, or maybe we choose to say, well sin is not really what you think it is. You know, it was only my body that sinned, it wasn't me. Well I'm sorry that the whole man belongs together, spirit, soul and body, and Paul prays that all may be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We cannot say we have not sinned. There are two Christian stances that appear in these verses. The first we've already alluded to in verse 7, it's that we walk in the light, and that results in fellowship.

Now think of what we've been turning over in our minds here as we've been looking at these verses, when it says we have fellowship with him, we're having fellowship with the God who is light. There can be no hypocrisy, brethren, there can be no pretense. He must see everything as it really is, and that's why there needs to be such repentance in the assemblies today.

Because you see the Lord Jesus has eyes like a flame of fire, and he sees the hypocrisy that is rampant in some quarters. I can remember going into an assembly and hearing a brother pray at the breaking of bread. I found it a very uplifting prayer.

I thought of it as bringing me into the presence of the Lord, but I'm ashamed to say that when I came back two years or a year or so later, that brother was praying the same prayer almost word for word. Something wrong there, brethren. He was able to utter profound truth, even to bring blessing to others, and yet someone who had become spiritually decrepit and stale, the psalmist said, I'm anointed with fresh oil.

There's a need for freshness in the assemblies. We were talking about the breaking of bread being boring. I would agree there's no need for the bread to be boring, but I have been in breaking of breads, times of fellowship with the Lord, and you may condemn me for this, but I've gone out feeling that we had not really been in touch with the Lord at all.

You know brethren, some of this complaint that we have about the breaking of bread is not really an attack, always not really an attack, on the breaking of the bread per se. It may be an attack on the travesty we've made the breaking of bread to be by our poor level of worship. Our God is light.

How dare we stand up and participate in the breaking of bread when we have not been worshipping him through the week? And it's that kind of hypocrisy that in part is causing a very strong reaction in some quarters today. And it's not enough just to defend the breaking of bread as such. We must rectify our abuse of the breaking of bread.

We must put those things right. There is a need for repentance among believers that attend the breaking of bread. Have we ever noticed as we go through those seven messages of the Lord Jesus to the seven churches, that seven times over he calls upon them to repent? Oh I know that he doesn't call upon the church of Smyrna to repent.

She was suffering so deeply. Nor does he call upon the church of Philadelphia to repent, but I want to suggest to you that was because she'd already repented. Repentance is a characteristic attitude of the churches according to the Lord, and it ought to be there.

As he looks over those seven churches of Asia, he says the characteristic note, the characteristic call is repentance. And we need to repent of those things which displease our Lord, for he is light and in him is no darkness at all. We can't carry on in a hypocritical fashion and think we're loyal by defending the breaking of bread when actually we're contributing to a breakdown of all that is holy and that should be pleasing to the Lord.

We have fellowship with him, and if we confess our sins we have forgiveness, and thank God there is always as a result cleansing. May God bless his word to our hearts and help us to truly serve him. I didn't get a chance to sing with you on that last number, that we sang, but while I was listening to some of the ministry, I highlighted some of the words and some of the verses of these hymns that were chosen and included in the booklet that was given out and

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/7/SID7961.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/colin-anderson/building-on-basics/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net