

# (1 John #5) Walking in the Light - Part I

by J. Glyn Owen

---

*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of aligning our beliefs and behaviors with the truth of God's nature as light to maintain genuine fellowship with Him.*

**Duration:** 38:17

**Topics:** "Following Christ"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of walking in the light and having transparency and honesty in our lives. He encourages listeners to open their hearts to God and seek His judgment and guidance in all aspects of their lives. The preacher highlights that living in the light means acknowledging and confessing our sins to God, and allowing the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us from all sin. He also warns against professing fellowship with God while engaging in behavior that is inconsistent with His nature as light, stating that such a profession would be a lie. The preacher urges listeners to strive for deep fellowship with God by constantly referring to His judgment and aligning their lives with His moral standard.

---

## Transcript

We continue this morning with our theme in the first epistle of John, turning today from the principle that must forever regulate Christian fellowship, as that is enunciated in verse five, when it says that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. We turn from that to the human response to that fact. John here proceeds to enumerate three attitudes which would be fatal to the emergence of Christian fellowship, and that is really what we have beginning with verse six in chapter one and going right through to verse two in the second chapter.

Here John is concerned to show that there are certain personal attitudes which are simply incompatible with the fact that our God is light, and if we persist in indulging in such attitudes of mind or of heart or the corresponding mode of behavior, then we shall find that we know next to nothing of this thing that John speaks of as fellowship with God who is light. Now, before we come to these attitudes, may I just notice something which I think is very important here. Three times over in these verses, beginning with verse six, three times over John introduces something with the words, if we say, if we say, if we say, and he has the same thing really in chapter two, verses four, six and nine.

It's put in a slightly different word, a slightly different way, he that saith, he that saith, he that saith. Now what John is wanting us to get hold of here is this. We may say quite a lot, and it means very little.

We may claim with our lips that we have this or we are that. We may profess this and profess that. In and of itself our profession may mean very little.

There must, says John in this whole passage, this is the thrust, there must be something in our lives that gives credibility to what we say, what we say, what we say. Of course it is desirable to have a credible, to have an audible confession of faith. Scripture says so.

Jesus says so. He says, you who will confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father who is in heaven. If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, says Paul, and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we shall be said, of course that is important and desirable.

But it must always be accompanied by something else. The mere bare word of profession in itself is inadequate. And that is really the pungent message of the passage that we are entering upon today.

Now, in this passage, John proceeds to write, telling us that there are two main areas of life, very specially, where it is possible for us to entertain attitudes, belief or behavior, which are quite inconsistent with the fact that God is light. And that we acknowledge that, and believe in him, and have made him our God. Now, first of all, the Apostle first announces that if the profession to have fellowship with God is belied by a behavior which is inconsistent with his nature, as light, then he says, we are simply liars.

Look at verse 8. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie. This is very plain speaking, this. And we do not the truth, or we do not live according to the truth.

In other words, to say with our lips that we have fellowship, whilst we live in a manner that is inconsistent with the God with whom we claim fellowship, well, that just makes what we say a downright lie. Again, from there, John proceeds to affirm that if our profession to have fellowship with God is accompanied by certain beliefs about ourselves, then we are simply giving the lie to what we profess. Now, he mentions two particular beliefs.

The first in verse 8. If we say we have no sin, that is, sin in our natures, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Says John, if in walking in the light, as you profess, if in walking in the light you were heard to say that there is no sin in you, then, says John, your profession to be walking in the light is absolutely wrong. Because any man who is walking in the light who is God, or the light that surrounds God, will know his sinfulness.

And then, in verse 10, you have something similar. The second belief that belies a profession of fellowship with God as light is that which denies the practice of sin by us personally, denies that we have committed sin. Says John, if we say that we have not sinned, Now, this is the action of wrongdoing.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. In other words, then, to sum it up again before we come down to particulars, what John is saying is this. Our Christian profession is this, that our God is a God of light.

This is the message. But we go further. If we are Christian, we say that we have fellowship with God who is light.

John says, all right. All right. But make sure, he says, that if you say that, what you say must be accompanied by a behavior and a belief that is consistent with a God with whom you say you have fellowship.

Now, this morning that brings us to the incompatible behavior that he mentions here. I think I referred to verse eight, did I not, earlier on, which was wrong. It's verse six, of course.

Let's turn to that now. This is the first personal attitude which, according to John, is incompatible with our having fellowship with God who is light. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth.

Now, just note in the first place the profession that is there made, the profession that is envisaged. We say, says John, that we have fellowship with him. Now, I'm not going back this morning in order to bring out again all that is involved in Christian fellowship.

Suffice it now simply to say this. Fellowship means sharing life with God. It means being reconciled with him and then sharing with him.

We are living together on the same plane. There is no warfare between us. There is no enmity between us.

On the contrary, we love one another and we live with one another and in fellowship. Now, that's the profession. The verbal claim is we have fellowship with God and that God with whom we have fellowship is a God who is light.

As a matter of fact, the words that John uses here remind us of what he said earlier in verse three when he claimed concerning the apostles and all those in fellowship with the apostles, truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are claiming when we say that we have fellowship with God, we are claiming that we are related to God in the same way as the apostles were, in the same way as the early church was. We share in his grace and his goodness and his promises and his presence and his power.

Now, it may well be, of course, that at this point John is echoing some of the claims of the heretics to whom we referred when we started this series, the Gnostic heresies. Because it is quite true that they were making a profession to be in such intimate fellowship with God that really they were ahead of everybody else. This is always characteristic of the cults, always characteristic of heresy.

Heresy goes beyond the apostles of our Lord. Heresy claims something which goes beyond the norm of Scripture. And these people were claiming to be beyond.

They had a light that the apostles did not have. And in consequence they said they had such intimate fellowship with God, the apostles were left far behind. Now, over against their verbal claim, they who say that they have fellowship with God, the apostle, albeit indirectly, clearly envisages a moral contradiction inherent in such a profession.

If we say, he says, that we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie. You see, these ancient Gnostics were apparently as brazen, so brazen as to make this profession, even whilst they were living, not making occasional excursions into, but living on a plane of moral perversity. They were flagrantly violating the laws of God.

They were flagrantly living on a moral plane that was lower than and inconsistent with God who is holy. And therefore, says John, there is a moral inconsistency here which belies what you say. Now, let us stress this point even if we fail to stress anything else.

Darkness is not a shade of light. We are living in a queer world, a world that calls darkness light and light darkness. According to the Bible, light and darkness are absolutely antithetical and irreconcilable.

Moral darkness is not a shade of moral light. Darkness is not light in embryo, light in the promise, light becoming. It's nothing of the kind.

Darkness and light are opposites. And they can never, never be reconciled because light is what God is, and God determines what it is at all times. So that there is something very radically wrong when someone claims to be living in the most intimate relationship with God who is light, and they are living on a plane morally which is the exact antithesis and contradiction of what they say with their lips.

The implication of such a claim as this, of course, is that sin really doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. Now, we might not go to the extent of saying that, but my good friends, may I ask, may I ask us to face ourselves this morning.

Are we not sometimes living as if sin did not matter? Is it not true to say of us that very often times our policy and our principle is this, to get as near to it as we can without getting burnt? Rather than keeping as far away from it as we can to the glory of God. To avoid a resemblance of evil. Sin does matter, and the implication here is that it does matter.

We can have fellowship with him, sweetest fellowship, the most intimate, and yet we live on a plane of moral life which is quite inconsistent with it. Now something's wrong here. Here then is a most blatant form of what is sometimes referred to as antinomianism.

The being in the government of God, anti-law, against the law of God, against the authority of God, against the rule of God, and therefore not taking any serious steps to put his law into operation in our own lives. One writer explains the Gnostic attitude by saying, and I quote, They thought of the body as a mere envelope covering the human spirit and maintained that man's spirit was inviolable. In other words, sin couldn't touch you.

You may commit anything you like, you may do anything you like, you may look at anything you like, but it doesn't touch your spirit. You're in an envelope. The envelope may suffer because of certain sins you do in the body, but the spirit itself is inviolable.

It could not be contaminated by the deeds of the body. Another writer explains it by saying that the Gnostics claimed, and I quote, to have advanced so far along the road of knowledge that for them sin had ceased to matter. They claimed to be so spiritual that sin was of no account at all, so far on that for them the laws had ceased to exist.

Now that is the profession that is here envisaged. It's a profession with the lips to have fellowship with God, but it is a profession to have fellowship with a God of light whilst they're still living on a plane of darkness. Now the conclusion that is reached.

If we say, says the Apostle, that we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, conclusion, we lie and we do not the truth, or we do not live according to the truth. In the light of the moral contradiction involved in such a profession, the Apostle of Love insists that he must indict these people, and he doesn't. He doesn't hold his punches here.

You know, my friends, we've got a mixed-up idea about love, haven't we? Love is sometimes very daring and very open, and it says things very straight from the shoulder. There are times when love has to speak loudly and clearly and unambiguously, and it's the Apostle of Love who says here, look, he says, if you say you fellowship with a God of light and you walk on a plane of moral darkness, which is the antithesis of light, look, he says, you're downright lying. Now, my good people, I don't know what you'd do with the Apostle John if he said that to you this morning, but he says it if you belong to this category.

You lie. You lie. We lie.

A positive charge, we lie. Actually, John says this four times over during the course of his epistle. We won't go into that now, but four times he says that, and it's the Apostle of Love, and he's a courteous man.

Oh, he's a perfect gentleman, John. He wasn't uncouth. He wasn't an uncivilized man.

Don't you believe it? You read his letters and see. No, no, no. John, John knew what etiquette required.

But look, he says, we lie if we say we have fellowship with a God who is light and we walk down there on the plane of moral darkness. It's a downright lie. Too much is at stake here not to speak the truth.

It may hurt. It may bring persecution to the speaker, to the Apostle, or anybody else that repeats his terms of his language, but it must be said there is a moral inconsistency which is a veritable lie, unenacted lie. Negatively, John puts it like this.

We do not the truth. Now, probably that is a Hebraism, and that's why it sounds a little bit odd in English. We do not the truth.

I notice that the Revised Standard Version says we do not live according to the truth. But it misses the point, you see. Because to the Hebrew, truth is not something that you simply believe.

Truth is something you do. You do truth. You have to act on it.

You don't simply believe it with a mind. If you believe it with a mind, you act upon it, and the two things are one. Truth must be done.

This is a Hebraism, and it's true to the whole Hebrew concept of morality in the Old Testament and coming on into the New. Truth must be done. In other words, if I say that I believe something, and it's simply a matter of intellectually holding to it, and it doesn't affect my life, well, I just don't believe.

If I say, for example, that I believe God is light, but that doesn't have anything to say to my behavior, then I just don't believe. I fancy I do. But I hold an opinion.

And to hold an opinion is a different thing from believing. I would hazard the guess, my friends, and I hope you won't be angry with me for saying it, that the Church of Jesus Christ is full of opinions about God. But men and women who really believe are less a number.

To believe is not simply to hold something in the mind, but that which I hold in the mind masters my life and molds my living. Now, that's the point here. And that principle applies to the matter before us, according to John.

And he does not hesitate to draw the logical conclusion that to believe that God is light and then to walk in darkness is inconsistent with the nature of true Christian belief. To add that we have fellowship with him, and not just believe in him, that we have fellowship with him is to add insult to injury. Religion without morality is an illusion.

Amos recognized long ago that only those who are agreed can walk together. And Paul asked the question demanding a negative reply. How come union has light with darkness? So then we turn to the last thing.

From the profession envisaged and the conclusion announced to the correction that is prescribed. Now, what have we got to say to this? Very challenging so far. It cuts through, doesn't it? Reaches me anyway.

I hope it reaches you too. It comes through the camouflage. It makes me ask myself many questions.

I hope it makes us all ask questions. But now, what is the correction to this attitude of living as if sin were unimportant or didn't matter at all? What is the correct attitude to take? Well now, says John, here's the correct attitude. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.

John now turns from the exposure of what is false to the exposition of what is true and what is right. He insists that there can be no fellowship with God by way of refusing to take sin seriously. Since God is light, we must accept his view and his verdict upon every aspect of life and living.

Otherwise, we treat God as if he did not exist. And he has graciously made provision for those who are prepared to be thus realistic and rigorous, who desire fellowship with him more than anything else. Now, let's look at it.

We shall be brief. The first thing I want you to notice is the duty that is universally prescribed. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, the principle expounded here is that we let God determine our standard of living.

Walking in the light means this. It means referring every decision, every project, referring everything to the God who is light, and asking him to assess it and evaluate it and decide for me, because I want to walk in fellowship with him. He must determine what is right and what is wrong.

Now, this is a very rigorous, sometimes a very painful discipline, but it is the discipline of the Christian life. This is how Christians have walked, when they walked in a manner consistent with their profession. It is to walk in the light, hold nothing back in the dark, have no secrets between you and God, open your heart to him and say, Lord, this is how I am thinking.

Am I right? Lord, this is what I propose to do. Is it right? Lord, this is what I have done yesterday. Was I right? Give me your sentence.

Pass your judgment. Tell me what you think. Show me what is right.

And in the light of God, I accept his verdict. Living in the light. Our duty, as enunciated by the apostle, therefore, is to turn our backs upon all that can be described as darkness, or shady in any way, and to make it our habit to regulate our lives according to God's moral excellence, and therefore his moral standard.

John requires of us a way of life which is marked by transparency and honesty, Godward. We must live in the eternal light, which is God. We must hold on to nothing that is inconsistent with that.

Every habit, every behavior, every thought, every notion is brought up and assessed in the light. Now, if that is the duty that is universally prescribed, look at the discovery which will be eventually made. What if I do that? Now, what if we do this for one day? What if we do this today now? Everything we are going to relate to God.

And we say, Lord, is this right? Is this consistent with your moral character, your moral nature, your moral excellence, your holiness? You see, what's going to happen is this. I'm going to become aware not only of the fact that I'm doing something wrong now, but over a period of my life I've been living in a wrong way. Certain principles that I've held have not been consistent with this.

Certain modes of behavior have been inconsistent with this. And what's going to happen is this. I'm going to become aware of all kinds of things that have been wrong in my life, in my belief, in my behavior, all along the way.

Well, how do you deal with that? How does this gender fellowship with God? How is it possible for this kind of thing to bring us to a place of fellowship with God? Well, now, says John, and let me quote him again, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we will have fellowship one with another. You say, how? Now, expositors divide here, and I noticed that there might have been a division of opinion in our group this morning if we had opened this up for more discussion. Someone voiced the view that the reference here, we have fellowship one with another, refers to we have fellowship with other Christians.

And I'm sure it includes that. But if you read it carefully, I think you will see that in the first place, in the first place it refers to fellowship with God. That is the theme here.

If we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship one with another. Who are the two parties concerned? Well, in the first place, they're God and ourselves. Because, you see, what happens when we come into the light? Let's use this picture for a moment.

Now, what happens when we come into the light in order to walk in the light? Think of it as a picture, pure and simple. Coming into the light from the darkness. Now, God is light.

The whole world is dark and black. It's all darkness in the world. Use the image for a moment, the picture.

God is light. Right. And I am part of the black sinful world.

All of us are. But now I'm coming into the light. In other words, I'm coming near to God and I'm opening up before him that he should assess my thinking and my living, cast the light of his holiness upon me, and let me see myself because I want to know what I look like from his vantage point.

I want to know his assessment of my life and of my living. I'm coming into the light. Now, notice what is happening.

That's the first step into fellowship. Because what a man wants when he comes into the light is this. He wants to know what God is saying about him in order to do what God says.

The moment you step out of the darkness into the light and relate your life deliberately to God's judgment, that very moment you've taken a step towards fellowship with him. And then, of course, with one another.

We have fellowship one with another.

And the first step into that fellowship is to take God seriously. If you fail to take the holiness of God seriously, you will always be living in the shadows of a true Christian experience, never in the reality. It is absolutely essential that we take the holiness of God seriously and let him judge us.

But you say, I don't understand the logic of that. If I come into the light, all right. That is a step towards fellowship with God.

I'm opening up and I want to know what he thinks and what he says about me in order to obey. Right. I can understand that.

But there's so much sin in me. But you see, this is how John ends the verse. When you come into the light of God, you never see sin only.

When you begin to walk in the light, you will always see the blood of Christ that relates to the need of the sinner who is walking in light. Now, this is the difference between the accuser of the brethren and the savior of sinners. The devil very often accuses us and leaves us there.

He reminds us of things we've done and he breaks our hearts. He brings this charge against us and that charge, and we have to say, if we're honest, yes, you're right, and you don't even know half the truth about me. And we could add much more than the devil says to us about ourselves.

But you see, he generally leaves us there to mope over ourselves and we're left in a state of hopelessness. And you never, never find that in Scripture. Here is a man walking into the light.

He's coming into the light of the throne of God and he's saying to the Lord, Lord, my heart is dark and black. I have an awful lot of sin here, but I want your judgment upon it. I want to know what you think.

I want to know what you require of me. The whole hideous thing comes up before me, and I know what God says. He condemns it, and He requires this and He requires that.

But if I'm in the light, I shall always see something else. Oh, the preciousness of it. What will I see? And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, keeps on cleansing me from all sin.

Now, there are two processes that are going on simultaneously here according to the grammar of the sentence. The first process is this. It's a man walking in light.

Walking in light. Living, you see, on this plane that I constantly refer things to God. Constantly refer to His judgment.

Constantly receive His adjudication. That's one level of existence. That is one continuous thing that is taking place in John's imagery.

Now, as long as that takes place, so long the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, keeps on cleansing us. In other words, the only thing that you Christians need is this. Be honest with God.

Don't hide yourself. Don't excuse yourself. Don't pretend to be other than you are.

He knows much better. Don't wear a mask. Don't pretend.

Open up with God. Let Him say to you what He wants to say and judge what needs to be judged. And in the process of walking in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, keeps on cleansing us from all sin.

So, you see, the ensuing fellowship is at one and the same time a fellowship in the light, but under the blood. Now, I'm going to repeat that because I want the devil to hear it. It's a fellowship in the light, but it's a fellowship under the blood.

Everything Godward is made ours through the blood of the everlasting covenant, through the sacrifice of the Mediator, through the death of Calvary and the resurrection of the third day. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us. One little word.

Thank you. I can't open my mouth today. But one little word we dare not leave.

The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Now, will you underline that little word, all? It's very difficult, you know, preaching the gospel and expounding the scriptures, because knowing oneself, one knows other people a little better. And we go to extremes.

Either we are too sensitive or we are not sufficiently sensitive. And perhaps you find the same thing in one person at different seasons. Now, I can imagine if somebody here this morning saying, All right, I'm letting the light of God's countenance break in upon my past experience, and I know so many things that are wrong, and he says they're wrong.

And I can understand God's Son dying for this and forgiving me for that and cleansing that, but what about this? What about this? I can't forgive myself. I can't forget it. The skeleton lives with me.

It wakes me in the bedroom every morning when I get up. And it follows me to bed in my mind each night I go to sleep. Oh, my friend, I want you to hear the word of God this morning.

Cleanseth us from all sin. Have you got it? All sin. All sin.

The man or the woman that begins to walk in the light as God is in the light and relates the whole of life to Him will feel uncomfortable, terribly uncomfortable, as God begins to assess this, that and the other. But wait a moment, it's never the end of the story. The blood of Jesus Christ covers the whole.

All sin, my sin, not in part, but the whole were nailed to His cross, and I fear them no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul. This is the gospel.

I, therefore, am encouraged this morning to invite anybody here who doesn't live on this plane. I can't judge you, and I won't do it. But as you judge yourself, you may not be living on this plane.

You've never referred everything to the light which is God and accepted His assessment of everything. You're not living in the light. I am encouraged this morning to ask you to come right into the glare of it.

Open up completely, don't try to hide anything. And I'm encouraged to do it, not simply because you will have fellowship with God, but because I can assure you that in order to have fellowship with God, the blood of Jesus' Son avails to take the stain away. And your fellowship with the Father will be under the canopy and the efficacy of the blood of His peerless Son.

Take the first step, if you've not done it before. In your heart of hearts, decide here and now, by God's grace, that you'll do this. Characterize your life, that you'll be on the way toward this deep fellowship with

God which the apostles knew.

And sin was judged daily, hourly, by reference to God. Not to men. Times without number, they had to say.

We cannot, we must do the things that God has ordered, rather than the things that men require. But they were judged by the light of God. May the Lord lead us then by His grace and enable us so to respond to His truth today that we shall know increasingly, on a personal level, on a level as a church, and as fellowships of people living in areas within this great city, we may know increasingly what fellowship and communion really means to God's glory.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/4/SID4806.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/1-john-5-walking-in-the-light-part-i/>

# *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](http://www.sermonindex.net)**