

How to Maintain Fellowship With God

by Michael Durham

This sermon emphasizes the importance of walking in the light of God's truth, maintaining fellowship with Him through courageous confession of sin, and understanding the depth of Christ's sacrifice for believers. It highlights the need to agree with God about sin, embrace His forgiveness, and experience the freedom and assurance that come from being in right relationship with Him.

Duration: 1:16:16

Scripture: John 1:5, 1 John 1:7, 1 John 1:9, Hebrews 10:22, Matthew 3:16, 1 John 1:8, Hebrews 4:16, Ephesians 5:8, Psalm 51:10

Topics: "Walking in God's Light", "Confession and Forgiveness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of walking in the light of God's truth, maintaining fellowship with Him through courageous confession of sin, and understanding the depth of Christ's sacrifice for believers. It highlights the need to agree with God about sin, embrace His forgiveness, and experience the freedom and assurance that come from being in right relationship with Him.

Transcript

Father, we ask that you would look upon your people now with divine favor, holy favor, gracious favor. You love us with an undying love. You've always loved us and you've set us apart for your own glory and pleasure.

Lord, we confess tonight our weakness. We feel so deeply our neediness. How do we please you? How do we honor? How do we glorify you? How do we lift up the name of our blessed Savior? How do we ever extol his greatness, tell of his magnificence, display his beauty? Lord, we are not sufficient.

Lord, I am truly incapable of doing so apart from you. But we have the hope and the promise that you have made us. Without me, you can do nothing.

Abide in me and I abide in you. And you said what you desire and ask I will do that the Father may be glorified. Here's our desire that the heavens would open and we can see you and be transformed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.

In your name we pray. Amen. The text I pray the Lord be pleased to speak to us from is John's first epistle chapter one verses five through ten.

First John chapter one verses five through ten. I want to speak on Christianity's certainties. You could subtitle this How to Maintain Fellowship with God.

First John chapter one. We're going to begin reading with verse five. This is the message which we have heard from him and declare to you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just 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 in us. Tonight I believe it is going to be a watershed evening for many of you.

Those of you who are still lost in your sins, it is our prayer and firm belief in God that tonight some of you will see the beauty that you heretofore have never seen. For those of you who have seen him in his beauty and you have been captured by it, I believe for you tonight that you will never forget this evening because God will do things for you that you have prayed for, sought him for days, weeks, perhaps months, that he will open your heart and your understanding to Christianity's certainties. Now, I don't say these things so boldly because I boast in me and my preaching.

Oh no, not at all. My confidence is in him that he is faithful to all his promises. And he has promised his people, as we heard today, exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think according to the power that works.

And he's at work here. He is here. I remind you once again, as I often do to most of my audiences, we are attended by royalty here tonight.

And it's not any of you, it's him, King Jesus. And he loves you much and he wants to work in you. So let me make a statement and spend the rest of the evening giving a defense and evidence for it.

Here it is. God's goal tonight for the rest of your life here and beyond this world is for you to rejoice in this fact that you are a sinner saved by grace. God wants that to be so central, so rooted in you so deeply that it revolutionizes your life.

Many of you will say, oh yes, I know I am a sinner, but I have also been sanctified. I don't know if anybody caught it last night, but our beloved brother Paul at one moment stopped and I can even see him in my mind's eye as he pointed and gestured and said, I am a sinner, present tense. And I thought to myself, I'm sure at this moment, there are a few squeamish ones here because some of you have come to the conclusion that you're no longer a sinner.

You are a saint. You've been saved by grace. You're a new creature in Christ.

All things, old things have been passed away. Everything's become new. That's what you used to be.

But now you are different. Well, that is true. You are a saint.

You are a sanctified one. You are one set apart, but you are still yet a sinner that needs nothing but grace. And my good news tonight is the God of all grace and comfort's here, here to pour out that grace and comfort upon you.

So God's goal is that you can rejoice in that fact. There are four certainties about Christianity in this text that will fuel this joyous gladness in the grace of God to we sinners. These four facts are unchanging certainties on this side of heaven.

Three of the facts survive this world and are true in the world yet to come. The first to state it here is that God is holy. Secondly, Christianity's essence is fellowship with God.

Number three, John tells us that fellowship with God is based upon the death of our blessed Lord Jesus. And fourth, Christians are light and yet there remains darkness in them. So let's look at the first one found in verse five.

God is holy. This is the message which we have heard from him and declare to you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. John starts with God.

And this is exactly where we need to begin tonight. American evangelicalism has run amok. It has changed the guiding theological star from God to man.

God is our north star and everything rises or falls upon a correct knowledge and understanding of the Lord God. Listen dear child of God. I'm not talking at this moment to the lost individual, but to the saved individual.

All internal problems, not external, all internal problems flow out of a shift from God to you. When a man becomes the center of his universe, that universe begins to heave and convulse until nothing is left in its created order. Life becomes something other than God's intended purpose.

And this compulsion to make everything about us still is in us. Still there. And it hasn't left the church world or the Christian.

It's still there. Well, you say you're preaching to the wrong crowd. We already know that.

We've understood that a long time and we've come out of that kind of evangelicalism. We've come to see that God is the center of all things and our worldview has shifted from a man-centered view to a God-centered view. And so you are wasting my time now.

Well, I dare say while your theological world has had a conversion, there's still this tendency to drift to self-centeredness. There is within each one of us this constant pull to make ourselves the focal point of life. And you must not, listen carefully, you must not be so foolish to assume that your theological accuracy has translated into real experience.

Martin Lloyd-Jones said he spent half of his time in ministry trying to persuade people that doctrine was essential. And he spent the other half of his time in ministry trying to prove to people that doctrine was not enough. I wouldn't give a dime for theological accuracy without experiential reality.

But oh, the price of theological accuracy with experiences far above rubies and precious gold. That's what we need. That's what God's saved you for.

So I want you to listen to your heart. Listen to what it says when challenges come, when life is disrupted with undesirable interruptions. What does it say to you? What do you think and say? Do you complain? Why do you complain? Isn't it because like Israel of old in the wilderness, you feel you deserve better? What is that? Self-centeredness.

Do you worry? Does anxiety settle in like a cold front chilling your heart and freezing your faith? What is that? Well, it's self-centeredness. You see, you don't have the supply or the resources to confront your circumstances. Your resources are not enough to resolve the problem and now you're frightened.

Your eyes are on yourself. If you were looking to your elder brother, nothing could bully or intimidate you. If you were looking away from yourself to him, he would keep your heart at rest and your nerve steady.

Let me ask you another question. Is the Lord the center of every thought? Meaning, does every thought that strays in and out of your mind connect itself to Christ? Does those thoughts find its way to Christ or did they leave the mind straying from being stayed upon Jehovah? Do you see what I mean? Every one of us has this constant battle dealing with this internal natural tool from self. Oh yes, many if not most of us here tonight have God as our theological center, but that's where he remains in our theology books and in our confessions.

He's not the burning sun with which everything in our life revolves. So that's why I say we start with God tonight and why the apostle John starts with God when writing to saints. And what is the first thing John says about our God? What is it? He's light.

Again, verse 5, this is the message. God is light and in him is no darkness at all. John ascribes the message to Christ.

He summarizes our Lord's ministry and said, this is what we learned from him whom we handled, whom our eyes saw. God's light. Now what does he mean when he says God is light? What he doesn't mean that God is a luminary, although he is.

John's not referring to the fact that God gives forth light, although he does. He's not talking about how many lumens God shines. He's not talking about some abstract idea of light shining.

No. In the Greek grammar, when you do not have the definite article as the word light does not have, it speaks to the essence and the nature and the character of the thing that it's describing. So therefore, John is describing to you and me the very essence of God, the nature of God, the character of God.

He's telling you that God is holy. That's what he's saying. He's speaking of God's moral character.

God is holy. And this is the way God is introduced from Genesis to Revelation. Is it not? Think back to when Moses was confronted by this holy God, as the bush burned and was not consumed and Moses drew near.

And what did God say to him? Do not draw near. Take off thy shoes from off thy feet for the ground wherein thou standest is holy ground. God is holy.

God is separate. He's far above us. Oh yes, he shines with the brilliance that exceeds the noonday sun.

Yes, he is beauty so glorious that even the winged seraphim cover their eyes with two wings that they dare not look upon the glory of he who sits on the throne. Yes, if he was to appear right now, our bodies would begin to tremble and melt and disintegrate. He's not talking about some manifestation of light.

He's dealing with who God is. God is holy when he appears to Isaiah. And that harmonic chorus of angels began to sing what was their song? Holy, holy, holy is the Lord and host.

And as a result, Isaiah literally felt his body coming apart. Woe is me. You remember when Peter saw the light? They'd fished all night and caught nothing.

Jesus tells them to go again, go right, right back where you've been fishing and caught nothing. And when the light of Christ was displayed, Peter saw it. And what was his response? Do you remember? Depart from me for I am a sinner.

Oh Lord. A few short years after that, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee named Saul was on his way to Damascus. He saw the same light of the glory of Jesus Christ.

He fell to the ground and what did he exclaim? Lord, what will thou have me to do? Now listen carefully, especially you who are not Christians. I don't mean that in a derogatory way. It's just a fact.

You're not a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ until you feel your lostness. You cannot be saved until you feel your lostness. I didn't say you know you're lost.

I said until you feel it, until it is palatable, until you know it, you will never be saved. One of the most shocking days with my youngest son was a day when I asked him, said, son, what's God doing in your life? Here was his answer. Dad, I know I am a sinner.

The Bible says I am. You tell me I am. I know I am.

But dad, I don't feel like I am a sinner. Do you know what happened to dad that afternoon? I began to become so frightened that I could not give God rest until he saved my sons. Why? Because I for the first time was confronted that my sons were going to hell.

All of those prayers that their mom and dad had prayed, the presumption that one day God would save them was now gone, evaporated. Why? Because God was not doing anything with him. God had abandoned him to his own self-righteousness.

It was the most frightening place to be. And dear friend, if that's where you are tonight, you cannot feel your sin. Then please cry out to God and ask him to make you to know it.

Make you know it. I don't know much about conference decorum, but I would suggest if that's you tonight, you ought to be on your face on this floor right now begging. I mean begging God, because if God doesn't intervene and make you to know how lost you are, he's already starting judgment, the work of judgment.

We heard that last night. Maybe a little illustration might help. It's a poor one.

That's all I come up with is poor ones. Many years ago, I used to deer hunt. A friend of mine went out in the afternoon hunt to a place where he had leased many, several acres, all basically wooded acres.

In the mid-afternoon, he took me to deep into the woods. My European friends would call it a forest. And it was, it was certainly that.

It was everywhere, trees. And you know, trees, they all kind of look alike. But I carefully noted the path in which we went into the woods because I knew it was going to be dark when I had to leave.

And, and I tried to find any kind of landmarks that would help guide me out when the hunt was over. Well, it was an uneventful day like most of my hunting days were. And it's now 30 minutes past dark and I have

to quit and come down out of the tree.

And I gather my equipment and I said, okay, hmm, I think I'm pretty sure I know which direction to go. And I start after five or 10 minutes. Now it's even darker.

There was no moon that night. It was pitch dark. And in the middle of the woods, it's even darker.

And at that moment, all the trees look alike. Even with my flashlight, I could not discern anything that I had seen coming in. And well, I wasn't too panicked about it.

It wasn't too alarmed. I thought, well, I've got a good sense of direction. I know which direction the truck is.

And we were supposed to meet at an appointed hour. So I continued walking in the direction I thought I was supposed to go another five, 10 minutes. I should be at the truck by now, but I'm not.

Hmm. Something's not right. I guess I made a wrong turn somewhere, but I once again, believed that I could find my way out.

And I proceeded after about 15 minutes of this, I had discovered I'm going in circles. It's true. It does happen.

Now I had one recourse. I had a walkie talkie. My friend had a walkie talkie and I thought that was no problem.

I'm not lost. I can get out. I can find my way.

And once again, I proceeded. And after another 10 minutes, now I know I've got a problem. What if he comes looking for me and I'm not where anywhere near where I was or where he thinks I am.

And okay, I've got the walkie talkie, but what if his batteries are dead or mine is dead? So I checked the walkie talkie. Now I continue for another 10 to 15 minutes. And now it's getting very cold.

And my mind just kind of starts working with me. All I could see was the newspaper, local pastor freezes to death, dear honey. But I still wouldn't pick up the walkie talkie until after another 10 minutes, I think, what if I'm a note, I'm a mile away and he'll never find me.

And about that time, I reach into the pocket to get the walkie talkie. And there I see a flashlight coming towards me. Walkie talkie goes back in the pocket.

I'm right there. I'm almost there. I'll be right there.

Just a moment. Now I know that's lighthearted, but I don't mean it to be lighthearted. The application is real simple.

Isn't it real clear? What kept me from reaching to the walkie talkie after the five minutes realizing I'm probably lost pride. It's all it was. I didn't want to be seen as incapable of finding my way through the woods.

I wanted to be my friend to think that I was a good woodsman and it was pride. But what caused me to reach in my pocket finally and reach for the walkie talkie to call for help? What was it? I'd come to the conclusion that I was lost and I could not find my way out. Friends, until you know your state before God,

you will not look to Him.

You say, but I don't feel lost. What criminal would dare to argue before the judge? Well, judge, I may have committed serial murders, but I don't feel guilty. I felt like they all had it coming.

What would he do? What kind of defense would that be? My friends, it would only make his crime more reprehensible. It would cause the judge to want to throw the book at him and give him the maximum penalty because he shows no remorse. And so here you sit before God and you say tonight, I don't feel like I'm lost.

I don't feel guilty. I don't feel like a sinner. My dear friend, do you realize the blasphemy that you are committing against God, telling Him that somehow He's impartial, He's unfair, that He's picking on you? He's picked you out and He's decided to deal with you in a very unfair way? No.

God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. He does not play favorites. He does not wink at sin.

He cannot do that. He is absolutely pure, moral excellence, par excellence. He is virtue and everything good.

He must deal with you. You cannot win your way into His favor. God is holy and we start here because the gospel always begins with bad news.

Good news always has to start with bad news. Number two, Christianity's essence is fellowship with God. I want you to look at verse six and two things I want you to note about this verse.

First, Christianity is at its core restored fellowship with God. Look at verse six. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

You see the phrase, if we say we have fellowship with Him, look at now verse seven. He continues this theme, but if we walk in the light as He's in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. This is something He is continuing which He started in verse three.

Look at verse three, that which we have seen and heard we declare to you that you also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Don't misread John. He's not telling you that, listen, if you accept our message that you and I can have some great times together in the Lord, we'll have some wonderful fellowship.

That's not what he means, although that is a byproduct. No, he is saying if you believe the message that I give you, then you too can have the same kind of fellowship that I and the other apostles enjoy. Think of it.

You can have the same kind of fellowship with God that John had, the beloved. Now some of you don't believe that or you would be shouting right now. Your face would betray your heart and show joy.

You can walk as close with Jesus as Paul the Apostle or Peter. That's what the text is saying. You can have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Do you have fellowship with God? Do you enjoy God? Are you intimate with God? Is God the desire and the panting of your soul? Do you have fellowship with God? We didn't ask you, are you right with God? That's not what John is saying here. He is saying that rightness with God is fellowship, fellowship divine.

It's more than being rightly related to God.

You know I can be rightly related to someone but yet not have a relationship with that person. This is relationship language. It's the essence of what Christianity is.

God saved you that you and He might be intimates. What is the terrible penalty of sin? What is the terrible penalty of sin? And most evangelical Christians answer hell, eternity lost without God. No, it isn't.

What happened to Adam the day he sinned? God said the day that thou eatest the fruit thereof thou shalt surely die. But Adam lived to be 930 years old. Was God threatening and didn't keep the threat? No.

The moment Adam partook of the forbidden fruit something cataclysmic happened to him. Something internal took place. His spirit was ripped from the spirit of God and spiritual death took place.

He was a walking dead man and physical death was the result of the spiritual separation between he and God and eternal death is the ultimate spiritual death. To be absent of any good, any kindness, any grace of God. So friend when Jesus died on the cross He did not die just to forgive you of your sins so that when you close your eyes in death you can awake in heaven.

He died that you here tonight, tonight might know Him as the word know is biblically used. It's often used between a husband and wife and the most intimate physical union. Adam knew his wife and she conceived and bore a son.

Joseph did not know Mary until after she had delivered her firstborn son. What is he talking about? He's talking about intimacy. Just not knowing somebody's name or a few things, the facts about them.

No. God hangs on a cross so that you can climb into His heart and enjoy the rivers of delight that flow from that heart. That's why you've been saved.

Is that the passion? Is that the pursuit? Notice John parallels fellowship with God with practicing truth. Again verse 6. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and we walk in darkness we lie and do not practice the truth. So John is equating fellowship with God with practicing truth.

Now what is this word practicing the truth? Literally translated. I have to tell you all of your modern translations really are not as accurate as they could be. In this case as we were talking about this afternoon the King James actually nails it on the head.

It literally means do not the truth. Do not the truth. Yes it means to live accordingly, to practice truth.

But there's a reason why I bring out this fact tonight. It's because this is common language to John. John says something like this in his gospel chapter 3, quoting our Lord Jesus Christ.

John chapter 3 beginning with verse 19. You want to follow along. I'll be reading through verses 19 through 21.

And this is the condemnation said Jesus. That the light, here we are again with the motif of light and darkness. That light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.

Don't forget this verse. It will come up later in the message. Men don't like the light because they're evil.

And then he says verse 20 for everyone practicing evil hates the light does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. But verse 21 here it is. Here's our word.

He who does the truth does. That's the same word in first John 1. Does the truth comes to the light that his deeds may be clearly seen that they have been done in God. Now what is this? At first sight we could conclude that John is simply repeating another often repeated phrase.

He that loveth me keepeth my commandments. That this is nothing more than legal adherence to commandments. And if you do that you keep the commandments then you are in fellowship.

You're doing the truth and therefore in fellowship with God. But that's not what he's suggesting here. Yes commandments ought to be obeyed.

But he's going deeper. Listen carefully. This is not about obedience outward obedience to commandments or regulations.

This is dealing with your relationship to the truth. It's a little deeper. What's your relationship with the truth? To see this I want to take you back to the Old Testament to Genesis 47.

In the Greek Septuagint which was the Greek translation of the Old Testament scriptures. Our same word for do is right here in this text. And I want you to see it.

Genesis 47 29. Bear with me. I know this is a little technical.

But you just prayed that you wanted to hear the word of God. This is the word of the Lord. Jacob's about ready to die.

Calls his son Joseph to him. In the time drew nigh. Genesis 47 29 that Israel must die.

And he called his son Joseph and said to him if now I have found grace in thy sight put I pray thee thy hand under my thigh and deal kindly and truly with me. Bury me not I pray thee in Egypt. Do you see the words truly with me.

That's the word. Do the truth. The same word.

Deal truly to act faithfully to act honorably. To put it in the negative. Don't be dishonest with me Joseph.

Please keep your word. Deal truthfully with me. And so what this means to do the truth or not do the truth is describing your relationship to the truth.

Do you love it? Do you desire it? You see John is telling us that he who has fellowship with God does the truth. He loves the truth. He seeks it.

He follows it. But more than just this legalistic adherence to commandments. No.

He comes to the light. He doesn't attempt to deceive himself or others. He deals honestly with his own soul as well as with God and with others.

And he's willing. Listen carefully. He's willing to know himself.

And he aims to know himself. He desires to know the true state of his heart before God. That's why he comes to the light said John in John 3. He comes to the light so that his deeds can be exposed as if they're from God or not.

Why? Because that's what he wants. It's what she wants. He comes to the light to see what he does is by the power of God or not.

One of the questions that came up this afternoon which I'm glad I didn't have to answer was what about regrets? I'll tell you one regret. Preaching sermons. One of my biggest regrets.

Looking at this time. Looking at this sacred desk. Pumping out another sermon because it's Sunday again.

Going through the motions. Preaching the truth. Not deviating from what the text means, but without the power of God.

I want to come to the light because I don't want to preach that way anymore. I despise this desk without God's help. And so the only way for me to be truthful with myself, I've got to go to the source of light so the light can expose my heart.

You need exposure tonight church, Christians, children of God. We are to be lovers of light if we're lovers of God. If you want to walk with God, if you want to be intimate with God, you've got to be honest and transparent and open before God.

That's what he's saying here. There's a love of the light that translates into a transparency. He knows this.

Are you listening? Say amen. If your neighbor didn't say amen, slap them a little bit and wake them up. This is awesome truth.

The child of light walks in the light because he knows an open heart means open communion with God. That's the fuel. That's the motive.

It's not legal adherence. He or she loves the light because that's where God is. Brother Michael, I want to be in the light.

I want to be in the light. I need the light. I need the light.

I want the light. Brother Michael, please. Brothers, would you come? Let's lay hands on my brother.

Let's continue. Is the passion for Christ still there? And most of us would say, I've talked to many of you these last few days. It's not what it once was.

It's not there like it used to be. It's not there like it once Well, here it is. You need the light.

You need to come into the light. How many of you will die with heads filled with theology, but hearts empty of God? Number three, fellowship with God is based upon the death of our blessed Lord Jesus. Look at verse seven, but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Now, what does John mean if we walk in the light as He is in the light? It simply means we live in the light of His holy character, meaning namely we're in agreement with God. It also means that we are in proximity, close proximity to God. God is light.

He's in the light. You're in the light. That means you are with Him.

And the prophet's question, Amos's question comes to mind. How can two walk together unless they be agreed? And this word agreed will come up in verse nine. This is what he is saying, that you are where God is, and there's where your heart is.

There's where you want to be in proximity. You want to be close to Christ. This is what revival really is.

Revival is about returning, returning to first love, to have the heart that we'd once had. We're not necessarily talking about butterflies and emotions, although true faith in God will always produce the correct corresponding biblical emotions. But that's not the concern right now.

The concern is, are you in close proximity with God? How can you walk in light of God's blinding, staggering, sin-exposing, evil-quenching light? How do you do that? Because again, God is light. He is holy. I'm not.

How can I walk with God and be in His light and still have sin? And so the question comes, doesn't sin disrupt fellowship with God? How can we have, quote, present tense sin and still be in the light? Look at verse seven, the last part. 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. How can you walk in the light and there be present tense? How can you walk in the light and there be present sin? Your sin deserves the wrath of this holy God, right? And we ought to die, for we are the guilty.

Therefore, the knife of sacrifice ought to be plummeted deep within this heart, this corrupt heart. There's only one penalty for sin, and it is death. The soul that sins, it shall surely die.

But here, the text draws our attention to the death of another. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son. These words are synonymous with our Savior's death.

Jesus' blood was shed means He died, and His death has continual effect. So, what does that mean? Let me give you a biblical illustration. It's the same truth of the Passover lamb.

For the Hebrews in bondage in Egypt, for that bondage to end, a new life had to begin, and a life had to die for that new life to start. For those whom the Paschal Lamb was slaughtered, they lived, and they left Egypt. For those whom there was no death, they died, and did not escape Egypt.

So, here's the fact. If you have had death, you have a death, you live. If there's no death, then you die.

That's what the Passover was all about. Listen carefully. Christ, the Holy Lamb of God, was killed for us and in our place.

Yes, we have a death. You say, once again, I know that. Most of you don't.

If you really possessed the death of this dear Savior, you would not wallow in condemnation like many of you do when you sin against God. It tells me you don't understand. You've been given the death of the Son.

You have a death. Therefore, you can live. Blood has been shed.

A life has been sacrificed on your behalf. It's not your life, it's His. Therefore, live.

But I want you to look at the One who's bleeding on the cross. It's truly the Holy One. It's the thrice-holy God who's hanging on that cross.

God is light. God is holy. There He is on the cross.

God who angels covered their eyes, lest they look upon Him, for they know they do not deserve to do so. Now, the sun closes its eyes, and it will not look upon the greatest crime ever perpetrated. It's almost a shame to shine.

The great light of the midday sun grows dark as the light of the world. And Jesus Christ and that life was snuffed out by the hands of cruel men. But even though darkness settles on the sacrificial mount, we must do all that we can to do our best to look and see Him there on Calvary this evening.

That's what I prayed for last night, the day before tonight. That God would help you climb Mount Calvary's rugged terrain and look upon Him who died for you. I'm not trying to be melodramatic.

I'm trying to present before you and ask Him the Holy Spirit to make it real. Why is He nailed to the tree? What crime did He do to place Him on the cross? His accusers said He made Himself equal with God. He blasphemed.

But I asked them the question. How can He blaspheme if it's true? If He is the Son of God, He did not lie. He did not blaspheme.

And He is God, a very God. He was the Son of God. He is deity.

His words are true. Before Abraham was, I am. He's the innocent one, the free of sin.

He's the spotless Lamb of God. Why is He dying the criminal's death? It's because, listen, God was working our great redemption. This is the activity of God.

And the great high priest, God Himself, was at work on this day of atonement. As a faithful priest, He placed His hands upon the head of the sacrifice. And He transferred your guilt, your sins, your darkness to Him.

And then He slew the substitutionary sacrifice. And He took His blood and sprinkled it on His heavenly throne. And our sins, like the scapegoat, were led away from us and from justice, never to be seen or remembered.

Beloved, this is the whole basis of our great doctrine, justification by faith. His death was a dying for all of our sins. Now, many want to ask this question of verse 7. Could cleansing us from all sin really be not dealing with justification, but sanctification? And I say, no, it's dealing with justification.

What John is doing is exactly the same thing that we heard last night from that great logician, the Apostle Paul. That brilliant mind of logic and reasoning by the power of the Holy Spirit presented one argument after another of logic and heavenly reason until the guilty has to cry out, condemned. But John is not using the skill of a debater or an arguer or even legal terminology.

No, he's using the terminology of relationship, but he's after the same effect. Because the Holy One died for the unholy, His death is our death. And by that death, all of our sins, even the ones you've been thinking as you've been sitting here tonight, have been dealt with past, present and future.

But there's one last thing I need you to see that's as certain as even His death. And that Christians, they are light, but there's remaining darkness in them. It cannot be said of us, as John says about God, God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

You can't say that about you. Verse 7 tells me I can't say that. Cleanses us from all sin, present tense.

Verse 8, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves when the truth is not in us. We cannot claim to be perfect. We cannot claim to be sinless.

Indeed, the Bible says we are light, we are the children of light, but we are light bearers. That simply means light is not native to you. It doesn't come from you.

It's not you out of your resource shining. No, you are a reflective light. You know this.

The light you possess is not your own. It's the reflection of God's light in the face of His dear Son. Just like the moon has no power of illumination.

It simply flashes upon the earth the beams of the sun. Do you remember Luther? Some of you will know his famous formula, simultaneously just and sinner. Now that seems like a paradox, doesn't it? At the same time, in a different way, you are justified, forgiven, past, present, and future.

Nothing's held against you. You are considered righteous as God, and yet at the same time, in a different way, you are a sinner just as vile, just as vile as he who hung on the cross and cried out, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And because that's true, here is Satan's deception.

He tries to take advantage of this. The trick of the enemy is to move your focus from the true source of light and to concentrate on your darkness. I want you to listen.

This is going to be, if God will help us, life-changing for some of you. So yes, there's still darkness in me. There's still remaining corruption.

Satan's trickery and deception is to get you to focus on your darkness, not on his light. He delights in showing you his sins. He makes hay out of your darkness, and it's this focus on our undeniable evil that renders us without reply.

What do you say? How can you deny it? There is this dark spot on your conscience. It's so plain to you. You think others must have to see it as well.

You have no excuse. You know you are guilty. You sinned.

Whether it be sins of omission, sins of commission, either way, your heart condemns you, and you know it. But here, listen carefully, is Satan's undoing and victory. Here it is.

The text says, look at the text, God is light. Verse 5, and in him is no darkness at all. Tell me, what does the text not say? It does not say that about me.

The scripture is very clear. Yes, we've died to sin, but sin's not died to us. Yes, it's no longer my master, but dear friends, there is remaining residue of it still yet within me.

And Satan loves to force upon your mind and your thought this fact. He reminds you that you're not light, and our focus must not be on that fact that we are not light, but that he is light. I want to argue for you, quit

playing Satan's games.

Refuse to condemn yourself that your light's borrowed, and that you personally are not as bright as you think you ought to be, and that there remains darkness in you. Quit lurking in the shadows of your heart. Lift up your face.

Behold the glory of the Gospel of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Listen, listen. It took me years to learn this.

I went through much heartache, misery, truly suffered a long time to understand what I'm about to tell you. You should look within your heart as long as it takes to see the corruption and cause you to run to Christ. Don't forget the words of the sainted McShane.

Learn much of the Lord Jesus, he said. For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. He's altogether lovely.

Why would you want to look at your heart? That wasn't McShane, that was me. Every time I look into this cesspool, it's like dumpster diving. There's no good thing in there that is in me.

McShane is saying, look to Christ. Live much in the smiles of God. Bask in his beams.

Feel his all-seeing eye settled on you in love and repose in his almighty arms. I think it was Thomas Chalmers who said, if you want to look well inwardly, look well outwardly. In other words, he was saying, if you want your soul to prosper, look from within your soul out of your soul to Christ.

Open the curtains of your heart and let the light in. Isn't that what light does? The coffee table can be covered with dust, but in the darkness you don't see it. But the beams of the sun come shining through the window and there it is.

And you're ashamed and embarrassed if you've got dust. Yes, the light does do that. Light does expose.

Very good. That's what the light's supposed to do. That's the work of God.

If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. And guess what? The beams of his great love for us expose the darkness that's still remaining in our souls. He gives light to where it's hidden and murky.

And we can see it. Now, I know there's an objection, always is when you hear something like this. And it sounds right.

The objection is, well, that's all well and good, but it seems to me that your preaching is making sin a like thing. You're not taking it very seriously. And if we follow your argument, we will never take sin seriously.

What I would like to answer that, and I don't want to be offensive to you, but may I say to you that your objection has the smell of hell about it? Isn't that the devil's argument against your own conscience? Doesn't he whisper so quietly that you think it's your own thought that you must not be so pleasing to the Lord because you haven't taken sin as seriously as you want to? Wait a minute. Isn't he the one that tempts you and says it's no big deal? Isn't he the one that says you deserve a little indulgence? And by the way, God is gracious. He'll forgive you afterwards.

But the moment you take the bait and sin, isn't he now the one who poses the question and condemns you and tells you how unrighteous you are? Isn't he the one now who changes his tune and says, how can you be sure that God loves you and that you're even one of his? Look at what you did. Isn't he the one that suggests there's little hope for you to be a Christian and that God cannot be gracious to one like you? So my friend, your argument sounds too much like the accuser of the brethren to me. But I still want to answer.

Your objection would be true. It would be true if you were not a lover of the light. But all of God's true children love the light.

That's the answer to your objection. It's found in the text. We walk in the light.

We do not run and hide from it. We run to the light. And again, I remind you the words of our Lord.

Let's go back. John chapter three, verses 20 and 21. John 3 20.

You've got to see this. Come on. Stay with me.

I know it's been a long day. This is I've done all of this to bring us to this point. He says, John three, verse 20, for everyone practicing evil hates the light does not come to the light lest he should be exposed.

Now, if you don't love the light, then, yeah, you could take my words, twist them and defend your lack of seriousness about sin and holiness. But all you're doing is sealing your already condemned state. But those of you who are truly his, who've been saved, born again, washed in the blood of the Lamb, listen to me.

You love the light and you even love it when the light exposes the sin, because then you feel the love of God. Friends, I've never felt more loved, but when my father lovingly corrects me, it tells me he's not abandoned me. He's not relegated me to a stepchild position.

No, I'm his. He's redeemed me. He's working in me.

He still has hope for me. He will not turn me loose. I love the light.

I want the light to expose. It's never pleasant. It's not always easy.

It's sometimes even embarrassing. But all they who love the light come. Look at verse 21.

He who does the truth comes to the light. Why? That his deeds may be clearly seen that they've been done in God. This is seen as it's played in verse 9. Look at verse 9. Verse 9 is really the continuation of verse 7. Verse 8 is put in there to re-emphasize those who are not wanting to admit their unrighteousness.

But 9 really flows from 7. Look at it. But if we walk in the light as he's in the light, we have fellowship with one another in the blood of Jesus Christ, his son. There it is again, cleanses us from all sin.

Verse 9, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to what? Again, cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But we have one last problem we got to deal with. I've still not answered the question.

How can we be walking in the light and still sin? And more importantly, still sin and still have fellowship with God. How is that possible? Because we've been taught, right, sin disrupts fellowship. Or does it? I

suggest to you don't start throwing stones at me and run me out on a rail as the heretic.

But sin does not disrupt fellowship with God. Not New Testament Christians. It doesn't disrupt fellowship with God.

I don't know if you had a father who was a disciplinarian like mine. I can still hear the belt being unbuckled. That's what he whipped me with.

Discipline, excuse me, disciplined me with. That's what verse 9 is there all about. Now, wait a minute, you say, but what if I'm justified, that means all of my sins past, present and future have already been forgiven.

Why this need for the cleansing of conscience? Well, listen, there are sins still yet within me. Corruption still there that I'm not even aware of yet. I'm still being startled by self-discovery in the area of my unrighteousness.

So the blood of his son is working on my behalf in those things. But listen carefully. I think it means even something more than that.

The tentacles of sin. Oh, sin is so hideous, so heinous. It has more than one approach and its tentacles are varied.

And one of them, those arms of sin reaches to the conscience when you sin. When you sin, the conscience cries, the conscience does what God created it to do, to label what you did as sin and evil and unrighteous. Now you could go the antinomian route and just simply say, OK, God saved me, I'm justified, doesn't make a big deal.

But friends, those who love the light, can't walk that way. How can two walk together unless they'd be agreed? And so John says, here's the answer. If we confess our sins, literally means don't, it doesn't mean say, I'm sorry.

It means to say the same thing, to feel the same way in certain degrees that God feels about your sin. The light has exposed it. The light has penetrated.

And what is your response? Lord, you're right. You're holy. I'm not.

Oh, thank you. There's a sacrifice. And this is where courageous confession comes.

It's what I call courageous confession. In Hebrews chapter 10, verse 19, the writer of Hebrews actually delineates this and teaches us courageous confession. He says in verse 19 of Hebrews 10, therefore, brethren, having boldness, underscore the word, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he consecrated for us through the veil that is his flesh.

Why the boldness? Do you see the connection? Boldness because there's a sacrifice. There's been a death, my death in the person of Jesus Christ. So I can come boldly and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near.

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. He says exactly the same thing in the fourth chapter, verse 16, you know that verse. Let us therefore come how boldly, courageously to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and grace in the time of me.

When do you need grace and mercy the most? When you have sinned. In fact, that's the context of chapter four. He's talking about the sin of unbelief and the children of Israel and that the people of God were not to be filled with unbelief, but faith in God.

He's dealing with sin there in that fourth chapter. Friends, listen carefully. When you're walking in the light, God will expose the sin because you're his and he loves you.

That's his covenant. His covenant is to wash you until you can be presented spotless before the bridegroom. And as the sin is being exposed, what do you normally do? You don't do courageous confession.

I'll tell you what most of you do. You hide from God. You run from God.

You back away from God until you can show God some semblance of sorrow. You put yourself in some penalty box until you have suffered long enough. Now you can come to the throne of God assured that you have suffered long enough and sufficient enough and God will grant you grace.

My dear friend, hear me. Path is an insult to our blessed Savior who died for us. I don't waltz into the presence of God flippant.

No, I come courageous. Why? There's a cross and a sacrifice on that cross. For me, that's how you maintain fellowship with God.

You keep your confession of sin up to date. You don't let it linger. You don't deal with it tomorrow.

No, no. When the light shines on there, then God is dealing with it. Agree with him.

No disruption of fellowship at all. At all. I've got naysayers right here right now who don't believe that.

And that's why you wrestle with assurance. That's why you struggle with the love of God. That's why you complain you're not for sure God is good or good to you.

It's because you do not believe his death is your death. You do not courageously embrace it. I want to conclude.

Some of you are going to recognize the name. Most of you I don't think will. An old Southern Baptist missionary named Bertha Smith.

She spent 42 years, single missionary in China. She went in the late, I think around 1917. And she was there during the Shantung revival.

That revival was on par with the Welch revival of 1904-05. You don't hear much about the Shantung. You hear more about the Welch.

It was amazing. Hundreds of thousands of people came into Christ and she was right in the middle of it. God used her tremendously.

At the age of 70, she had to come back home because the Southern Baptist Convention has a rule that all foreign missionaries have to come off the field at age 70. She lived until she was 99. One day, a couple who had known her for years were in her area and they stopped at her home.

She welcomed them, thrilled that somebody would pay her the time of day and visit with her. And of course, the immediate question when you greet somebody is what? How are you? How are you doing? And Ms. Bertha said, well, I'm doing quite well, thank you. And they visited for a couple of hours.

The couple finally took their absence and got in their car and left. They're traveling down the road and all of a sudden they see behind them in the rear view mirror, this car flashing its lights and the horn was honking. And they noticed the driver, it's Ms. Bertha Smith.

And so they pulled over. She pulled in behind them, got out of her car and went to the front passenger door and said, I've got to apologize. I've got to ask for your forgiveness.

Well, Ms. Bertha, what are you talking about? You asked me how I was doing. I have to be, I told you a lie. I told you I was doing well, but I'm honest.

I've been going through some challenges lately and I was not truthful. Would you please forgive me? Well, of course they forgave her and they got, she got back in her car. They drove off and she went back home.

And you look at that and you think, oh my, one of those fanatics that's overly crazy about holiness. No, no, not at all. She knew the only way to maintain fellowship was to agree with God about sin.

No matter the degree, no matter the sin, she took that seriously. She took communion, walking in the light and having fellowship with God, very, very serious. That's how you keep an open heaven and enjoy fellowship with God.

Do you remember when Jesus was baptized, what the Bible says happened? When he'd been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water and behold, the heavens were open to him. And he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove alighting upon him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven saying, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

It's interesting that Matthew adds those words and the heavens were opened to him. I think there's something there, don't you? I think it's the Holy Spirit indicating that Jesus had fellowship, communion with the father and the father's benediction and seal of pleasure. My friend, do you want that? Do you want open heaven? Nothing hindering your communication and intimacy with God tonight? Then confess.

This room ought to turn into a place of great confession. Godly sorrow ought to run down and cascade flowing from these hearts tonight. This is the means of fellowship with God, walking in the light, agreeing with that light, conforming to that light.

Why? Because there is a sacrifice and it's effectual tonight for you when you confess your sins. Even the Bible commands us to confess our faults one with another. Why? Because the conscience, I think, the conscience can stress the body and eventually distress calls undue afflictions in the body.

But when confessions, when one becomes honest and transparent, becomes open before God and one another and themselves, then healing can take place. Do you want to be healed tonight? Do you want your relationship restored to God? This is what God says. Step number one, keep your confession of sin up to date and you will continue to walk uninterrupted in fellowship with God.

Can I end with quoting that old hymn that we all know so well, the solid rock. You see, our salvation is rock solid and that rock is Jesus Christ. That's why I can go to God without fear of reprisal.

That's why I can run to my father knowing he will not give me the back of his hand, but the kiss of his lips. That's why I know there's no bars. There's no gates preventing me to come to him.

Why? Because my salvation is on a sure foundation. Jesus, the Son of God, crucified, buried and risen. That's my hope tonight.

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood. And righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. When darkness, here it is again, when darkness veils his face, I rest on his unchanging grace and every high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, his covenant, his blood support me in the looming flood. When all around my soul gives way, he then is all my hope and stay. And when he shall come with trumpet sound, oh, may I then in him be found, dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.

On Christ, the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. Amen. We feel at times, Lord, that we owe you a debt.

We're debtors. In one sense, it's true we are. But in another sense, there's no debt.

It's been paid in full. Father, please make the sinner to know that there's a way that the debt can be canceled and you not be against him anymore through Jesus Christ and his death for sinners. Open their eyes.

Cause the heavens to open and let them see him crucified, resurrected, conquering king, sin slayer who can kill all of the sin with one blow. Help us whom you have saved, whom you've been so kind to open our eyes to see something of him. Lord God, Father, whatever it takes, whatever it takes, help us to see more clearly how great you are and how great your love towards us is and how finished our redemption is.

Help us to see this tonight. Set your people free. They believed lies and therefore they've put shackles of lies upon their hearts and their faith has been stifled.

Lord, set them free. They are free men and women, but they're living like slaves. Reveal it to them.

And we thank you in Jesus name. Amen.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/_B35Wr2x3vs.mp4

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/michael-durham/how-to-maintain-fellowship-with-god/>

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