

Walking in Light Amidst the Darkness

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Date: 22 January 2023

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[0:00] We received some disturbing news from Acosta Pond this week. The bishops of the Church of England, the Mother Church for Global Anglicanism, announced that they would start blessing same-sex relationships in the English Church.

! They claimed they're not changing the Church's doctrine and would not allow gay marriage in Church, yet they would perform services of dedication and thanksgiving, pronouncing God's blessing on same-sex couples who married.

Now, in such services, there would be blessings of the same-sex couples' rings, wedding rings. And the Bible says, the bishops, rather, the bishops of the Church of England have decided to do this to show Christian love for those who are in these kinds of relationships.

In fact, one of their key verses is found in 1 John 4, verse 16. God is love. And those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

Now, I'm sure many of you are familiar with this false argument. It's the same one that was used by the Episcopal Church in their departure from the true faith. Yes, indeed, God is love.

[1:14] They love to talk about that all the time. But what they fail to do in all their preaching about love is to look in God's Word, to account for Him first in their hearts, to love Him foremost as He commands, knowing that it is only by loving God first that one can hope to love his or fellow man rightly.

That is, after all, the summary of the law that we hear every Sunday at the beginning of our service. Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says. You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it. You should love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend on the law and the prophets. And as Jesus said in John 14, that those who love Him are the ones who obey His commandments.

It is such people that He and His Father will come and live with. It is to them that the Holy Spirit is given as a helper. In other words, these are the people who have fellowship with God.

So, when they decide to bless, that is, the bishops of the Church of England, when they decide to bless that which the Bible says will lead people to eternal destruction, one must ask, how is this love?

[2:33] It is not loving to go against God's expressed Word. 1 Corinthians 6.9 says this, Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men will practice homosexuality. Now, 1 Corinthians 6.9 seems quite clear to me.

But these are the bishops, after all. They say they've read the Bible. They've done studies and convened panels on all the issues. They say it's difficult to determine what the Bible has to say on the matter of human sexuality.

They claim to love Jesus and to love their fellow men. Yet they embrace sin, the kind of sin that places people outside the kingdom of God.

Which way are we to go then? John helps us to answer or to confront any uncertainty that might come up in this letter. Notice that John, who spoke more of love than any other New Testament writer, didn't begin with love here in these verses.

[3:45] Yes, God is love. But we must first come into His light before we can truly know His love. So, John continues in this letter, in verse 5, by telling us that God is light.

He says, This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Now, you know, when the Bible speaks of God as light, it usually talks of two things primarily.

The first thing is God's revelation of Himself. We see this in Psalm 36, verse 9. For with you is the fountain of life, and in your light we see light.

And then we see this, secondly, in His holiness is perfect purity. And I think John has both ideas in mind here when he says, God is light.

God is revealed to us as holy, perfect, pure. God's holiness is the first thing we must reckon with as fallen humanity. God is of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, Abakkuk writes.

[4:59] But, John in agreement, also writes, in Him is no darkness at all. So, John says, this is the apostolic message that we bring to you.

First and foremost, this God who comes to you as the incarnate word of life is light. He is holy. He dwells in unapproachable light.

Now, if this is true of God, it has moral and ethical implications for us as created beings. How can we truly have fellowship with such a God?

John answers this by refuting three false statements. The first of those statements is in verse 6 to 7. The first false statement is that sin does not matter.

Now, anyone who claims to have fellowship with God and says sin does not matter is a liar. Look there in verse 6.

[6:00] If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. Now, to walk in darkness is to walk in disobedience to God's law.

To make light of sin. That is what the bishops in the Church of England have done with their recent decision. And remember, there is no acceptable sin before God.

All sin, all sin condemn us before God's perfect purity. Homosexuality is no worse. It's no worse than pornographic addiction.

Or a tongue that is quick to spread gossip or slander. Or a heart that's full of malice. Or stealing or financial dishonesty before God.

To claim to have fellowship with God while walking in sin is to be a pseudomai. A liar. Someone who does not practice the truth.

[6:59] Now, such people redefine sin and say that what God said is evil is in fact good. At this point, you might say to yourself, Well, but don't we all sin?

And if you're like me, you wonder, Knowing your own art and your own weaknesses, Is John saying, I don't have fellowship with God? And I think the positive correction in verse 7 should give us comfort.

And help us to fully see what John is saying. He says there in verse 7, But if we walk in the light, As he is in the light, We have fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus' Son cleanses us from all sin.

You see, To walk in light is not to be without sin. Rather, It is to choose to be ruled by God's word and standard.

It is to agree with God's word. That what he says is holy, And what he calls sin, What he says is holy is holy, And what he calls sin is indeed sin. By the way, If you think of it, It is only when you're in the light That you can be aware of your sin.

[8:16] It is the light that reveals the impurities in ourselves. It is the light that reveals where the dirty places are.

And those in darkness are blind. They are not sorrowful over their sin. They are a law unto themselves. They are fully in darkness. They don't see that they are mired in filth.

It wasn't until I came to Christ That I became fully aware of how wretched I am. And here's the comfort John offers us.

Christ's blood shed for you on the cross Purifies you. Cleanses you from all your sin. In fact, the language there is a continuous action.

It keeps on purifying you. That's what John is saying. In light of God's holiness, You will increasingly say with Isaiah, Woe is me.

[9:17] But, by God's grace, The blood of Christ has been shed for you. And it would always be available to cleanse you From all sin. Sometimes the shame of your sin Make you shrink back from God Into the darkness.

And you become afraid. You're afraid to say, It's me again, Lord. I've done it again, Lord. But that's exactly what the devil wants, Don't you see? For you to shrink back from God.

Whereas, God says to you, Come, child. My son has paid for it. Confess it. And be forgiven. It is in the light Of God's lavish love And forgiveness That we can have true fellowship With one another. Don't lose sight of what John is saying here. When we acknowledge our sins and wickedness, When we do not dissemble, That is, put a mask on it And pretend that it doesn't exist. When we do not cloak them, But when we confess them With a humble, lowly, And penitent heart, God promises to forgive us. Brothers and sisters, True fellowship comes When we live as if sin does matter.

[10 : 37] And we are quick to acknowledge and confess it Before our holy God. Now, John continues, And it gives us the second false statement And the rebuttal.

The second false statement Is against those who deny Having a sinful nature. He says there in verse 8, If we say we have no sin, We deceive ourselves, And the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just To forgive us our sins And to cleanse us From all unrighteousness. John is here refuting some Some who claim they no longer sin Because they are Christians And they have been forgiven.

We have no sin, they say. And John says to us, Such people are self-deluded. The truth is not in them. Implies that they are liars.

To live in the light Is to live in the truth. To say along with David, Search me, O God, And know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts.

[11 : 47] And see if there is any wicked way. In me and lead me In the way everlasting. Now the work of the Holy Spirit Is just that. Is to conform us To the image of Christ.

And that's a process That will take the rest of your Christian life On this side of eternity. God in His mercy Reveals our hidden sins. Even those hidden sins Even those sins that are hidden to us. And He cleanses us of them. And when God's light That is His word Invades and exposes your sin What do you do?

Do you duck and weave? And avoid the issue? Or do you confess And ask for God's help To overcome it? It's very easy to live As if we have no sin.

It's a subtle But very easy thing to do. And there are some There are some Who teach that Christians Can be freed from sin. That they can remove The sin nature And achieve perfection On this side of eternity.

[12 : 52] I want you to beware Of those who teach such things. I in fact I know such a man. I knew such a man. That is. He's not a member of this parish.

So don't worry. That this man claims That he does not sin anymore. And because he's without sin He's also immune To any kind of sickness Or illness.

And John's word About such self-delusion Rings through Concerning this man. And that's just what it is. It's self-delusion. He's deceiving himself.

Because you know what? Those around him Know he is not without sin. They just have to interact with him For a few minutes A few hours.

And they'll recognize Well this man is just as much A sinner as I am. And he's certainly Not deceiving God. But he's self-deluded. And beware.

[13 : 51] Beware. Beware. Beware. Even if you don't believe In that falsehood. It's easy to live As if we are without sin. It's easy to adopt The mindset Excusing your sins away.

It's grievous To your heart And your relationship With God And your fellowship With the rest of the body Of Christ When you do so. Because what often Develops is an acute sense Of other people's sins.

You become Really aware Readily Readily eager To call out Other people's sins. While you Yourself are Utterly blinded To your own.

Imagine how that Will impact Your fellowship With your brothers And sisters In Christ. Now John continues In verse 10 And talks about The third false statement And rebukes it.

It's the denial Of sinful actions. It says there in verse 10 If we say We have not sinned We make him a liar And his word Is not in us. And I want you to see That the patterns Of these three false statements Regarding sin Are related.

[15 : 04] It's easy to see I want my goal From denying The seriousness of sin To denying That one has A sinful nature To even denying Sinful actions Altogether. We recognize That pervasive Darkness We recognize Rather The pervasive Darkness In the wider culture Don't we?

Actual sin I mean Actual sin That is an affront To God Is not only denied But celebrated In our world today. From gender And sexuality Issues To abortion To even Common kindness And courtesy And the world Condemns you Or will condemn you For saying Thus says the Lord Regarding these things.

But such denials Have come into the church As well. The Episcopal Church And the Church of England Are just one example Of ways in which Such lies Have seeped Into the church The increasing Conformity Of the church To the wilder culture Is all around us But a problem Can even lie Closer Closer than that Because refusing To acknowledge Sin in ourselves Not only makes Us A liar But it also Makes God A liar So John Is saying here John goes On to say His word God's word Is not In us If we believe Such things The word The word of God Is our light Remember It is by Its light That we see Light As the psalmist Says So in other words It is by it That we can truly See God And know God In this way

To see Is to know So imagine How devastating It would be If God's word Is not in us Is God's word In you I ask God's word Read daily As food For your soul And spirit God's word Preached As we gather On the Lord's day And we all sit Under its proclamation God's word As we gather In smaller groups To grow As young plants In its light As the Holy Spirit Illuminates our minds To know God Is God's word In you Is God's word God's word In you As you gather To fellowship With your brothers And sisters In Christ But what of Making God A liar This is a severe Thing That John Is saying here He's saying That when we Deny our sins When we brush Them under a rug When we pretend That time And space Will absolve us Of its guilt We make God a liar By the way This is why The church Is called Not to tolerate Sin in the Bible It is a poison To the body Since it would Kill it over time And cause it Not to grow But even more Grievous than that Is that it tells A lie About the God We claim To have fellowship With It tells A grievous lie To the world About this God So when Christians Who claim The name of Christ Sin Wantonly And deny Their sinful Actions It dishonors Christ's name This is why The church Must not make Light of sin When it is Found in our midst We must call One another To confession When there is Obstinacy And willful Disobedience The church Is called To discipline

[18:56] Those who claim The name of Christ And yet live In unconfessed Sin God's name First and foremost Is to be honored Among us And second For the sake Of the upending Parties So For the sake Of their soul They must be called To confess Paul offers us In the next Few verses In the beginning Of chapter 2 Comforting words here Because We all know That we are sinners We all know That we struggle With sin We have the Sin is serious We have a sinful nature And we do actually sin So Paul tells us In Verse 1 Chapter 2 My little children My dear children I am writing These things to you So that you May not sin As a father To his beloved children He says to us

To keep away From sin He says to us Don't flirt with it Rather Flee from it But Notice that Nowhere in these verses Is John saying You and I Must be perfect And pure In fact He has repeatedly Said We are not And we cannot be But how then Can we Such miserable offenders That we are How can we then Have fellowship with God Well John has been Saying it all along Hasn't he We have a man in heaven He says it But if anyone Does sin That means When you do stumble And yield to temptation As you will In your Christian journey Know this You have an advocate With the father The only other time That word advocate Paraclete Is used In the New Testament Is in John's gospel And it's used To describe the Holy Spirit As Christ's advocate To the world But here Jesus promised That his Holy Spirit Rather In the gospel Jesus promised That his Holy Spirit Will be with you To advocate for him Before A hostile world But here Jesus Christ The righteous Who alone Perfectly obeyed God's law He is the one Who speaks In your defense He is your paraclete When you sin When you sin He is your advocate Before God He who alone Is without sin Stands for you Before his father Pleading your case He is the propitiation That is the atoning Sacrifice For our sins And not for us Only But also For the sins Of the whole world He pleads for you Not on the basis Of your work Or not on the basis Of your goodness Not on the basis Of your worth You and I Have nothing of worth To gain a favorable

Hearing before God So he pleads for you On the basis Of his shed blood For you At Calvary He says to his father Father Forgive him For it is for him That I died I have atoned For her sins Father It is for them That you send me Into the world It is for them That I went As a lamb To slaughter To appease Your righteous anger For their sins Father You must forgive them Now how do you think The father answers This request Of his beloved son Jesus tells us Jesus tells us In John 6 Verse 39 and 40 This is the will Of him who sent me That I shall lose None of those He has given me But

At the last day Dear Christian Hear this If it is the only thing You hear This morning Jesus Your advocate Is the one Who has secured Your mercy As the atoning sacrifice He has secured For forgiveness For you Your case Is not in doubt Before the heavenly court If you come to him If you acknowledge Your sin He is faithful And just To forgive you And to cleanse you Of all your Unrighteousness There is no Greater comfort No greater confidence Of God's love For you Than this You will acknowledge Your sin Come today And confess And be assured Of his love And forgiveness Be welcoming To eternal life With him

Is counted free For God the just Is satisfied To look on him And pardon me There's your comfort
Jesus Christ Your sinless savior Because of his death God the just Is satisfied God the just Is
satisfied To look on him And give you pardon Full Complete Pardon My friend Jason Wrote this
wonderful Self-reflection This week About contemplating sin And as I read it I thought I'll share With
you Because it really Ties into what We've just talked about And I invite you To please listen
Carefully To what he has to say He says Our popular story About reflection Of sin Is that It will
damage Our sense of self Forcing us to live Fearful Inauthentic Guilt ridden lives Our popular
Gnosticism

He asked Because if I can receive The love And grace Of God Even as I Stare Unflinchingly Into the depths Of my own Depravity Then I can Give and receive Love anywhere Self-acceptance Is a sham Without contemplation Of sin Self-deception And selfishness That's all they are We don't have To be discovered In all our Exquisite Individuality In others To be whole We can be human And holy In the grace Of God We can be human And holy In the grace Of God So beloved I heard you Look to Christ Cling to Christ Rest In Christ And little children

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