

Confidence because we walk in the Light

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[0 : 00] Well, I wonder if you've ever had the experience of getting dressed in the dark before, only to have a bit of a wardrobe malfunction, a bit of a mishap, like this guy.

Sorry, I've got the slides, thanks. So this guy, he realised he put two different shoes on. I've done that before. Has anyone done that before? No, you're not going to admit to it. Or for the girls, if you put your make-up on in the dark, like Michelle did one time, here she is.

Actually, no, that's not quite right. She just let one of our girls experiment on her at her expense. But the point is, it's hard to see in the dark, isn't it? You turn on the light and it reveals everything, which is why it's sometimes good, I think, to look in the mirror in the dark, because you always look better, doesn't it?

You turn on the light and it reveals everything. The light reveals and exposes the truth, both good and bad. It helps us to see what is true, like whether we're wearing two brown shoes or one of each.

And having revealed the truth, it then helps us to walk in the light of that truth, by wearing shoes of the same colour, for example. And this is the idea that our passage begins with today.

[1 : 17] In fact, our passage actually runs up to chapter 2, verse 14. The themes are all closely connected. But as I said last week, John is wordy and circular. He wants to show that all these themes are interrelated.

And sometimes he expands on those themes. The writing style is called amplification. He kind of amplifies as he goes in circles. And so, as I said last week, one jod is best read like a hot cup of tea.

You sip it slowly, which is why I've shortened it to just chapter 2, verse 2 today. And as we slip it slowly, it will warm our souls with reassurance and confidence.

Because remember last week, that's John's purpose in writing. For there were some who left the church he was writing to, and it shook their confidence in Christ.

And so, John is writing to give them this confidence back. And so, last week, we heard how we can have confidence of eternal life. For lots of reasons, but the one John gave us last week is because the gospel message is based on eyewitness evidence.

[2 : 25] Do you remember? John saw, heard, touched, and so on. Well, this week, we can have confidence of fellowship and forgiveness. Because we walk in the light.

So, we're at point 1 and verse 5. And I've got the verses on the screen as well for those online. This is the message. We have heard from him and declared to you, God is light.

In him there is no darkness at all. And this is a message that they, the apostles, heard from him, Jesus, about God. Now, light is sometimes a symbol for what is good and pure.

So, God is good and pure. In him there is nothing evil or impure. That's true. But in this passage, I think light seems to be a symbol for revelation and truth.

As I said at the start, light reveals truth. In fact, in John's gospel, that's what he kind of refers to. In chapter 1 of John, he says, the true light, that's Jesus, that gives light, revelation of truth to everyone, was coming into the world.

- [3 : 35] Or as Jesus famously said, I am the light of the world. Because he gives light of life. That is, he tells people, reveals the truth about eternal life.
- So, we don't have to walk in the darkness of ignorance. So, the message John heard from Jesus is that God is light. He is the ultimate source of truth.
- In him there is no darkness, no faulty bit of revelation, nothing false or ignorant. God reveals the whole truth and nothing but the truth.
- But people today still say, well, what is true for you is true for you and what's true for me is true for me. Everyone has their own truth they live by, don't they? But it doesn't always work.
- An extreme example, but a real life example, is sadly President Putin saying, well, it's true for me that I can take back your country. But how's that working out for the Ukrainians?
- [4 : 34] Not well, is it? Or we live by the truth of others, whether social media or current culture. But again, that doesn't always work because none of us are reliable.
- We're all sinful, flawed. I heard a story of a man who walked past a clockmaker's shop every morning and he stopped to pull out his pocket watch and reset his watch by the clock in the window.
- He did that because his pocket watch was unreliable. It lost time. And he needed to have the correct time because he was on his way to work at the factory where he was the timekeeper.
- And in the afternoon, he rang the bell for the shift change at four o'clock. Anyway, one morning he was walking past again and he stopped outside the window. And this time, the clockmaker struck up a conversation with the man.
- And the clockmaker said, look, I've noticed that you stop every morning to set your pocket watch by the clock in my window. He said, yes, that's right, my pocket watch is unreliable and I'm the timekeeper at the factory.
- [5 : 38] I need the time so I can ring the bell for the change shift at four o'clock in the afternoon. And the clockmaker said, look, I'm terribly sorry to tell you this, but my clock in the window is also unreliable.
- And so every afternoon, I set it by the bell I hear from the factory. The point is, we're all sinful.
- And so to rely on each other's truths is not going to work. We are not the source of truth. God is. God is light.
- He reveals the truth. So he determines what it is by his word, doesn't he? And if we don't walk in the light that is in his revealed truth, then by definition, we walk in the darkness of what is false.
- After all, the answer is either true or false. Yeah. And the problem with this is we cannot have fellowship with God. And so verse six says, if we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.
- [6 : 51] You see, light and darkness do not mix, do they? Sure, they play around at the edges of one another. But if you walk into a dark room and flick on the light, the darkness disappears.
- It flees to the recesses of the room, doesn't it? It doesn't stay around for some fellowship and a cup of tea with the light, does it? Light and darkness are simply incompatible.
- And so if you claim to have fellowship with God, who is a light of truth, but then you walk in the darkness of what is false, then you are lying and the truth is simply not in you.
- Sadly, we see this in churches even today, who prefer the darkness of culture's truth rather than God's light of truth.

Now, it's likely here that John is thinking particularly of those antichrists who have claimed to have fellowship with God, but they don't walk in his revealed truth about Jesus that says he is the Christ.

[7 : 57] No, they deny Jesus is the Christ. And so do you remember from last week, I kind of tried to set the scene. There are many antichrists, says John, and it says they went out from us. They left our church. And then he says, whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ, that truth, or such a person is the antichrist.

Kind of makes sense. And those who have left, who deny that truth, well, they're trying to lead others astray. But John says here back in verse 6, to claim you have fellowship with God and still walk in the darkness of falsehood, you know, that denies Jesus is the Christ, it's just simply not possible.

Light and dark do not mix. And so John is warning us, not just to make sure that we ourselves don't walk in the darkness, but also not to be fooled by those who do, and yet claim to still have fellowship with God.

They're lying and they do not live out the truth, verse 6. On the other hand, verse 7, But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

[9 : 15] That is, if we walk in God's revealed truth about Jesus, as God is already in the know about his revealed truth about Jesus, then we have fellowship with one another.

Now, when I first read this, I expected John to actually say we have fellowship with God, because that's what he's just been talking about. And I think that's implied, and he'll talk next week about knowing God, being in fellowship with God then.

It seems though his focus for the moment is to encourage their fellowship with one another. Just like we saw last week in verse 3, where he talks about fellowship with him and the apostles, before he talks about fellowship with God and his son.

But why this priority? Well, because remember, the church he's writing to has been rocked by a church split. By those antichrists who left, and are now trying to disrupt the fellowship by leading others astray.

Their fellowship has been shaken. And so John reassures them that it is not broken. For if they walk in the light, then they really do have fellowship with one another.

[10 : 29] Their fellowship is not actually destroyed by those who left. Because in the end, they were never really part of it. Those who left walked in the darkness. They never really belonged.

But if you are in the light, if you walk in the light, says John, you can be confident you really do have fellowship with one another. Now, antichrists have not shaken our church fellowship, have they?

And so how does this help us? Well, it helps us to know the basis of our fellowship. It's not based on the fact that we all barrack for the same football team, when everyone knows that Carlton is the best team.

It's not that we all love lamb roasts, even though there's nothing better than a lamb roast. No, the basis of our fellowship is none of those things. It's walking in the light.

It's God's revealed truth about Jesus. It's that we all believe in Christ and follow him as king or Christ. For he is the one that creates our fellowship in the first place.

[11 : 36] And this has at least two implications. At first, it frees us to have fellowship with one another, despite our differences. Despite those who are different to us, who perhaps barrack, dare I say for Essendon, I don't know if, if Alan's here this morning, I used to be a chaplain of Essendon.

I'm just stirring Alan. Or more serious, or more seriously, it enables us to get past those differences that perhaps annoy us. You know, that person who doesn't park straight, in the car park, that person who took your seat this morning, or that person who said something insensitive, whether they realized it or not.

Because what's more important than all those things, is that we walk in the light. That's the basis of our fellowship. And second, it reassures us that we really do belong.

Because sometimes, we might feel that we don't belong, or fit in here, because we are different. Whether it's because we come from a different background, have a different education, or have different gifts.

Or because we don't know as many people as someone else, or just feel a bit flat. But if you walk in the light, then you do belong here.

[12 : 50] You do fit in here. Because again, the basis of our fellowship is not any of those things. It's that you walk in the light of God's revealed truth about Jesus.

I'm sure we all need to work at expressing this fellowship, as we're able. You know, making efforts to welcome or talk to others, even if we ourselves are feeling flat.

But we can be confident that we do belong. Walking in the light gives us confidence, confidence that we have fellowship with one another, that we do belong here.

And secondly, it gives us confidence we have forgiveness of sins, no matter what the sin. So point to, and the rest of verse seven. It says, but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we not only have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his son, purifies us from all sin.

You see, if we walk in God's revealed truth about Jesus, we can be confident his blood forgives us, purifies us from sin. And do you notice at the end of verse seven, how many sins it purifies us from?

[14 : 05] All sin. Past, present, future. Even that sin, you are most ashamed of. Forgiven.

No longer to feel, no longer needed to feel guilty about it. How great is that news? And we still need this forgiveness, because unfortunately we still sin, don't we?

So, have a look at verse eight and ten. He goes on to say, if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Or verse 10, similarly, if we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his word is not in us.

The repeated word claim here suggests that John is again thinking of those antichrists who have left the church, who not only claim to still have fellowship with God, but now claim they don't sin.

Can you believe it? And it's hard to know how they could even think this. Perhaps they thought their so-called fellowship with God meant that anything they now did was no longer called sin.

[15 : 18] And so they effectively no longer sinned. I'm not sure. I doubt any of us, though, would think like that. But we can downplay sin sometimes, can't we?

Whether it's by convincing ourselves it's not that bad, or by ignoring it when we do, rather than owning up to it, or wishing we talk less about it at church, as someone once asked me to do.

But that's not to walk in the dark, that's to walk in the darkness of falsehood, isn't it? Not in the light of God's revealed truth. Which is why John says in verse 8, if we claim this, we deceive or lie to ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Or verse 10, worse, we make God out to be a liar, because his word tells us that we still do sin. When I drive the kids to school each morning, I confess that I sometimes lose my patience with other drivers.

Sometimes I yell at them in the car, what are you doing? Not that they can hear me. But then I quickly remember that two out of my three kids are learning to drive themselves.

[16 : 27] Not a good example. Or at other times, actually you don't need to hear any more, you get the point, I still sometimes lose my patience. And that's just one sin I still sometimes commit.

We all sin, don't we? Still. And so we're to keep confessing our sins, as we'll do later in the service today. But not just in church, but during the week. But we're to do so, confident God will forgive.

Because verse 7, if we walk in the light, the blood of his son Jesus purifies us from all sin. Or verse 9, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins, and purify us from all unrighteousness.

And we often read this verse after our confession, and we're going to do that, well, before today, before the confession today. And the bit where it says, God is just, used to puzzle me.

Because if God is just, doesn't that mean he should punish us for our sins, rather than forgive us? But then I realized, that because his son Jesus, has paid for our sins, then God can no longer demand, double payment.

[17 : 46] You know, one from Jesus, and one from us. And so now, his justice actually demands, he forgives us. Because the payment's already been paid.

Of course, this only applies to those, who believe. For God promises to forgive, those who believe. It's by faith we receive, this gift of Jesus' death, on our behalf.

And God is always faithful, to his promises. God is faithful and just, so that he will, forgive us our sins. Of course, this doesn't mean, that we now sin as much as we like, knowing God will just forgive us.

After all, if we walk in the light, then we'll seek to follow Jesus, and not sin. It's just that if we do, we can be confident of forgiveness. Chapter 2, verse 1 and 2.

He writes, My dear children, I write this to you, so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

[18 : 50] He is the atoning sacrifice, for our sins, and not only for ours, but also the sins, of the whole world. You see, John wants us to be confident, we really do have forgiveness.

And so here, he repeats the idea, he already said, back in verse 7, only this time, he amplifies it. He explains how Jesus' blood purifies us.

How? Verse 2, he is the atoning sacrifice. The word is propitiation. The idea is that his blood turns aside God's anger at our sin, so that God is free to now forgive us.

And it enables Jesus, his atonement enables him then, to be our advocate, to defend us against Satan, our prosecutor, who accuses us of deserving death, and plead our case before his father, the judge.

And Jesus always wins our case for forgiveness, again, because he is the atoning sacrifice. In fact, his atoning sacrifice is sufficient, for the sins of the whole world, says John.

[20 : 10] Though it's only effective, for those who believe, who receive it. If only the world would believe. But the point is that, if his atoning sacrifice at the cross, is sufficient for the sins of the whole world, then it's definitely going to be effective, for the sins of us who believe, isn't it?

For us who walk in the light. And this confidence of forgiveness, actually encourages us, not to sin, as John writes.

Now let me see if I can illustrate, as we wrap up. When I was younger, I started playing soccer, in the under sevens group, so when I was about six years old. Now I must confess, I wasn't the best player.

And so the coach, actually didn't put me on much. The coach liked to win. But I remember one time, he finally put me on, and I found myself, at the other end of the field, just in front of the opposition's goals, and the ball was kicked to me.

And so I kind of trapped it, which I was pretty impressed, with myself about. I stopped the ball. Six years old, remember. And then I heard everyone yelling at me, from the sideline.

[21 : 20] They were screaming at me. I couldn't make out what they were saying, but I did hear the coach say, what are you doing? And so I thought, has something happened? Did the ref blow the whistle, and I missed it?

And so I bent down, and picked up the ball. And the ref then did blow the whistle, and called handball. And when I came off the field, the coach told me off, and didn't put me back on.

I stopped playing soccer after that, for the next 20 years, because of that game. But the point of the story is, God is the absolute opposite, to that coach.

When we mess up, he doesn't scream at us, or sideline us. He forgives us, every time we ask.

And does that not encourage us, to keep playing for him? To keep trying not to sin? Do you walk in the light, of God's revealed truth about Christ?

[22 : 25] If so, then know with confidence, you have fellowship, with one another. You belong here. And know with confidence, you have forgiveness of sins, no matter what they are.

How good is our God? Let's pray.