

Sermon: We Know the Light

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Preacher: Dr. Wes Feltner

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. This is the message that we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

We say we have not sinned. We make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.

This is God's Word. Would you pray with me? Would you pray for me? And let's ask God in this moment to speak to us.

[2 : 28] Let's pray together. God, thank you for this opportunity to be in your Word. We pray, Holy Spirit, that you would guide us into truth.

Lord, we thank you for this time, this letter from 1 John. And ask God that it would be a means of strengthening our faith today as we look to you.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. How many of you have ever heard the expression, tilting at windmills? Tilting at windmills.

It's actually an expression that's based off an old Spanish novel and a character from that novel named Don Quixote.

Don Quixote. And the story is about a man named Don, who is a kind and friendly individual. And he's fascinated by medieval stories.

[3 : 28] Knights and castles and jousting and all of those kinds of things. He's fascinated by them. So much so that he actually starts to believe that he is a knight.

And not only that, not only is he a knight, but he's been given this mission as a knight to take on all the injustices of the world.

To go out and make everything that is wrong, right. So he and his sidekick, Sancho, they set out on a mission to fight all the world's issues.

On their journey, these two men come upon some towering objects. And when they do, Don turns to his sidekick and he says, Do you see those giants?

I will do battle with them. I will slay them and we will be rich. With the spoils of this righteous war.

[4 : 40] Sancho kind of looks at Don, quite confused. He's puzzled by this. And he responds this way. What giants?

What giants? To which Don replies, You know, over there. Don't you see them with their long arms? Sancho, still rather confused at what he's saying, Says, those aren't giants.

They are windmills. And yet, nevertheless, Don, who is so convinced that they are giants, pulls out his sword, pulls out his sword, and heads out to fight the imaginary giant.

It's from that story that we get the phrase, tilting or sometimes called jousting at giants. It's the idea of a person that sees everything as a fight.

Everything is a giant. Everything is a battle. Everything is black and white. Do you know anybody like that?

[5 : 56] Do you know anyone who everything is a fight for them? Everything is a giant for them. There's no middle ground at all.

Now, when I say middle ground, I'm not talking about compromise. I'm talking about balance. In other words, there are some people that simply do not understand that there is law, but there is also grace.

There is conviction, but there is also compassion. There is a need to stand firm, but there's also a need to not stomp on.

Do you see what I mean? A balance. And what I have discovered is that, generally speaking, the older we get, or at least the more mature that we get in life, the more we understand this balance.

For example, a mature coach realizes that there's a point in which you have to push a player, but at the same time, you need to keep them inspired.

[7 : 10] Or we know this when it comes to work. It can't be all work and no rest, but at the same time, it can't be all rest and no work. Parents know this.

You can't be too strict that you push your children away, but you can't be too soft where they stop listening. This is also true in friendships.

You've got to be able to say the hard thing, but also continue to encourage. Faith family, listen to me. Part of maturity, part of maturity is learning the balance between admonishment, don't do that, and encouragement, you're going to be okay.

Admonishment, don't go there, and encouragement, I'm with you. That's a mature, healthy balance in life.

And it is exactly the kind of pastoral and godly balance that we see from the Apostle John towards these believers.

[8 : 31] Remember the context. And if you're just joining us, go back last week to last week's message and you'll get more info on the context that we laid out at the introduction of this book.

John is writing because these believers are being influenced by false teaching. The false teachers that are specifically in focus here is a group by the name of the Gnostics.

And one of the things that the Gnostics taught, influenced by Plato, was that the flesh was bad. That the physical creation was bad.

Only the spirit was good. Which meant that as it began to influence Christianity, that God could not have come in the flesh.

God could not have been a man because the physical thing, the physical material world is evil and God could not be a part of that.

[9 : 38] And so they denied key central core doctrines and truth of Christianity. Things like the incarnation.

Things like the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that is why John writes things like this. Here is 1 John 1, verse 1.

1 John 1, verse 1. That which was from the beginning, that is Jesus, which we have heard and we have seen with our eyes and we have looked upon and have touched with our hands.

In other words, John is saying God was a real person. God came in real flesh. We saw Him. We touched Him.

He'll write, for instance, in chapter 2, verse 22. Who is the liar, but he who denies that Jesus, the man, is the Christ, is God.

[10 : 41] This is the Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. And then in 1 John 4, in verse 2. 1 John 4, verse 2.

By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of Antichrist, which you have heard was coming and now is in the world already.

So these believers that John's writing to, they're being influenced by this teaching. And some of them are starting to doubt their faith and lose their assurance and struggle with confidence. They're wondering, what if this is true?

Now, listen to me. This is very important for understanding our passage before us today. Denying the humanity of Jesus is not just a theological problem.

[11 : 43] It is also a moral problem. You listen, faith family, hear me. Denying the humanity of Jesus is not just a theological problem, though it certainly is that. It's also a moral problem.

Now, what would the connection between morality and God coming in the flesh, what would that connection be? Think for just a minute. Think for just a minute. The connection here is that if Jesus' body doesn't matter, if God coming in the flesh doesn't matter, then why would it matter what you do with your body?

If Jesus didn't have a body, then what difference does it make if you, what you do with your body? If Jesus' life, human life, didn't matter, then what does it matter?

How you live your life. Do you see? Denying God in the flesh is not just a theological problem, it's a moral problem as well.

So the issue here is not just one of denying the incarnation or the physical resurrection of Jesus, though that is clearly outside the bounds of Christianity, it's also justifying disobedience because it's denying that Jesus lived a human, obedient life.

[13 : 07] And we begin to see that creep in here as John writes these words. So denouncing Christ in the flesh is an encouraging of our own disobedience in the flesh.

So how does John, right here, how does John handle these believers that are struggling with this false teaching? How does John, the apostle here, address these Christians who are struggling with these things?

Does he blast them into next week? Is he going to yell at them with righteous anger? Is he simply, like some parents might do, just ignore it all together?

No, what we find here is that John takes a very balanced approach to the struggle these believers are having.

he's going to do three things and we'll do this over the next few minutes, three things. He's going to affirm them. He's going to admonish them and he's going to assure them.

[14 : 21] He's going to affirm them. He's going to admonish them and he's going to assure them. Look at verse five. 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.

This is faith family an affirmation of the truth, an affirmation of the truth. In other words, John begins with what they know.

this is the theme throughout the book. It's why we've entitled the series. We know he starts with what they know. This is the message that we have heard from Jesus and we have proclaimed it to you.

This is what they knew was true. Faith family, God is light. God is light and in him is no darkness.

Now, what does that mean? What does that mean? Now, come here for just a moment. I have to tell you that sometimes when I'm preparing for a sermon, there's always different crossroads for a preacher.

[15 : 42] Which way do you go down? People have different interpretations to a passage and almost everything that I looked at in preparation for the message dealt with this issue purely on moral terms like God is pure.

That's what it means that he's light and therefore you ought to walk in purity. Well, that's true. I'm not denying that at all, but I gotta be honest, as I wrestled with the text, it's like that doesn't fully make sense.

It doesn't quite fit the context of what John is trying to accomplish. And so here's what I want to do. I want to tell you what I think John is doing here.

I'm going to try to do my best to prove it to you, tell you why it matters, and then leave it to you as to whether or not you think I'm right. I will say I'm probably in the minority, but I have to preach what I think the text is saying.

So what does he mean by God is light? Here's what I think John means. Are you with me, faith family? I think John means this, you know who Jesus is.

[17 : 02] This is the testimony that we heard from Him, that will be important, and we proclaim to you God is light. In other words, you know who Jesus is.

Those to whom you're struggling with what the Gnostics are saying about the person of Jesus, hey, you know who Jesus is. You know who Jesus is.

where are you getting that out of God is light? Four things, and I'll try to give them to you briefly. Number one, the metaphor of light.

It's consistent with the metaphor of light. That is, light is revealing. Light is self-disclosing.

To say that God is light is to say that God has revealed Himself. We have seen Him. We have understood Him. And you know this. We say something like this in even common everyday language.

[17 : 59] We may say something like, I had no idea about blank, and then the lights came on. I had no idea about this, and then I saw the light.

Then the lights came on. What we're saying is, now I understand. Now I see. Now I know.

So, the reason why I think God is light is referring to you know who Jesus is, is because it fits with the metaphor of light. Number two, it's the main point of the passage.

The main point of the passage. In other words, the first four verses that we've looked at last week and lead up to verse five are not dealing with the issue of morality.

It's not dealing, oh, it deals with morality by implication, but not specifically. What the first four, that's easy for you to say, first four verses of 1 John 1 are talking about is who Jesus is.

[19 : 05] Here's the recap. That which was from the beginning talking about Jesus, we have heard, and we have seen, and we have beheld, and we have touched, and we proclaimed Him to you.

This is the message we heard from Him and proclaimed to you, what message? That God is light.

In other words, John's whole point in the first few verses of chapter 1 is to say, we know who Jesus is, and we proclaimed that to you, and you believed it as well.

Come on, come on, you know who Jesus is. You have had a testimony given to you about the person of Christ. So it fits with the metaphor of light.

It fits with the main point of the passage. Number three, did Jesus ever teach the apostles that He was light?

[20 : 13] Absolutely. In John, the Gospel of John, chapter 8, look at John 8 and verse 12. Again, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Hello? That's like almost a direct quote from 1 John chapter 1 verse 5.

Jesus' point in John chapter 8 when He says, I am the light of the world, what He's saying is, I am the Messiah.

I am God in the flesh. I am the one promised long ago. We know this because Jesus says that in John 8 and in John chapter 7 is the Feast of Tabernacles.

And on the opening night of the Feast of Tabernacles, they would light these giant menorahs and they would be like 75 feet tall and 10 gallons of oil would be placed on them and they would light up everything.

[21 : 30] The streets at night would be lit up with this light. And then when the Feast of Tabernacles was over, they would turn the lights out.

They would extinguish the flame as a way of saying the Messiah has not come. So when Jesus comes on the scene and He says, I am the light of the world, He is picking up on the Feast of Tabernacles and saying, that light that you've been waiting for, He is now here.

I am the light of the world. So, when, you still with me, when John says in 1 John chapter 1 verse 5, this is the message we heard from Him.

We heard it from Jesus and we proclaimed it to you that God is light. The reason why I'm saying that this means you know who Jesus is, is because it's consistent with the metaphor of light.

It follows the flow of the passage of 1 John chapter 1 and it's exactly what Jesus taught them in John chapter 8.

[22 : 45] And as if that wasn't enough, listen to how John starts his gospel, the gospel of John. John chapter 1 verse 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God, and all things were made through Him, and without Him was not a thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And there was a man sent from God whose name was John, that is, John the Baptist. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, and all might believe through Him.

He, that is, John the Baptist, was not the light, but He came to bear witness about the light, which was Jesus, the true light, which gives light to everyone who was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. What is He saying? The whole role of John the Baptist was to say the light is coming.

[23 : 56] The light is coming. Messiah is coming. God in the flesh is coming. And guess what? That light, the light of God, has come into the world, and His name is Jesus Christ.

You with me, faith family? God is light, that is, you know who Jesus is. You've seen the light, the flow of the passage, what Jesus taught, how John introduced His gospel, is all pointing to this, in my opinion.

You know, you know, you know, you know, you know who Jesus is. You know who Jesus is.

He is the very self disclosure of God Himself in the flesh. So what John is doing here is he's affirming these believers in what they already know.

God is light. We heard this from Jesus, we proclaimed it to you, and you have believed. Come on, you know who He is.

[25 : 20] You know the light. Now, John moves from affirming them and the truth they already know to now admonishing them.

Look at verse 6. Look at verse 6. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

So now we move from an affirmation of the truth, who Jesus is, to an admonition to walk in the truth. What does this mean?

What is John trying to say? Well, if I'm right about verse 5 and what it means, namely, you know who Jesus is, here's what I think He's saying.

Faith family, listen, you can't be right about Jesus and wrong about sin. You can't be right about the person of Christ.

[26 : 22] You can't have seen the light and walk in darkness. Do you see? You can't know who Jesus is and yet be wrong about what is sin.

Notice this on the screen. You can't believe that God lived a human life while at the same time have no concern with how you live your life.

That's inconsistent. You can't believe that God lived a human life while at the same time have no concern with how you live your life. If your faith family, listen, if your theological confession is Jesus lived a human life, light, you've seen that, you know who he is, if that's your theological confession, then your practical conduct cannot be, I'll do whatever I want.

I confess Jesus lived a human life, but I'll do whatever I want with my life. If that's the case, you are a liar and the truth is not in you.

You contradict your own theology. Are you with me? Do you see this? You know who Jesus is. He is light. So how could you justify the darkness?

[27 : 44] Do you see? That's what John is saying here. Walking in darkness is not doom and gloom. It's not witchcraft or depression or hating others.

It meaning walking in darkness is not that kind of a thing. Walking in darkness is simply the disconnect between Jesus is Lord and I'm going to live my own life.

That's darkness. That's walking in darkness. It's the difference between Jesus is Lord light and I'm going to live my own life.

Darkness. John is saying that doesn't work. That's inconsistent. You can't see the light and walk in darkness.

Do you see? John has no problem addressing the inconsistency of their theology. You see the Gnostics are saying oh God didn't come in the flesh.

[28 : 46] Do you realize the implications of that? If God didn't come in the flesh then you can do whatever you want with your flesh. No we've seen the light that God became flesh.

God came into human life and that means it matters how you live yours. Don't you see? I hope this makes sense to you. It makes sense to me and I believe it is the point of the passage.

This is the hard hitting punch these Christians needed. Come on. You know the truth. Now walk in it.

And that will be consistent throughout the book of 1 John. Now come here for a minute faith family. How do you think these Christians might feel at this point?

You know the truth. You know who Jesus is. He is light. So you can't walk in darkness. Well, my guess is they probably feel like, well, is there any hope for me?

[29 : 55] I mean, I've got to be honest, there is inconsistencies in my life. I'm a bundle of paradoxes. I'm sure these believers were feeling like, if it's only walk in the light and never any darkness, well, there's no way that I could ever live up.

So what does John do? Is he the pastor that only rebukes the flock? Is he the coach that only yells at his team? Is he the parent that only disciplines the child?

No. I love this. I love this. Watch how John, he admonishes them to walk in the truth and then turns right around and assures them.

Look at verse 8. Look at 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 cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. He gives them assurance in the truth.

[31 : 16] This is so helpful. This is so pastoral and practical. You know the truth. walk in the truth.

But when you don't, because there will be times you won't, that the truth of the gospel is still true.

He's saying here there's two ways you can be a liar, two ways that you can be a liar. That is, you can say, I know Jesus lived a human life, but that doesn't have any impact on how I live mine.

If you know the light, you can't walk in the darkness. And if you do, you're a liar. The truth's not in you. At the same time, if you say, well, Jesus lived the perfect life, and so do I, you're also a liar, because you know good and well that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and you do it all the time.

Do you see the balance? Do you see the balance? This is so helpful. If you say, I'm going to live however I want to live, well, John's going to say, how can you know the light and walk in darkness?

[32 : 36] And if you say, well, I guess I'll never live up, I'll never do enough, John's going to say, you have a Savior who forgives you and cleanses you of all unrighteousness.

What a beautiful balance. Walk in the light. Don't you justify anything. And when you fall, don't despair, because you know what?

Jesus forgives you, He cleanses you, He washes your sin as white as snow. And I think that balance is beautifully summarized at the beginning of chapter two.

Look at what John says next. It's just, it's the perfect summary. Verse one, my little children, I writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

Walk in the truth, walk in the light. Don't you justify darkness? but if anyone does sin, because you will, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

[33 : 54] Do you see the balance? He addresses their sin while never letting them forget they have a substitute. substitute. He addresses their sin while never letting them forget they have a substitute.

That is a mature approach. That is a balanced approach to your walk with Christ. And faith family, we need to be the kind of mature Christian, the kind of mature Christian that understands that balance.

That it is good to have conviction, but we must also have compassion. And it's good to have compassion, but we must also have conviction.

And those things go together. John's point in these verses today is this. Because we know that God is light, we cannot and we must not pursue darkness.

darkness. We know who Jesus is. The Gnostics don't. But you have heard it from us. God is light. You know who Jesus is. So do not justify the darkness.

[35 : 15] At the same time, we can't pretend that we have no sin. And we do not despair when we do. Because God is faithful and God is just.

And Christ is our advocate. and He is the eternal sacrifice for our sins. Faith family, today, be affirmed.

Be affirmed. You know the truth of Jesus. You know who He is. And if you don't, oh that today would be the day that you would believe.

That you would put your faith in Jesus Christ. The Christ of the scriptures. As John 1 says, in the beginning, He was the Word.

He was not only with God, He was God, and He became flesh. If you don't know that, I pray that you would trust that and believe in that today.

[36 : 15] Be affirmed in the truth of the gospel. Secondly, faith family, is be admonished. If you know the light, don't justify the darkness.

If you know the light, don't justify the darkness. You can't say, Jesus came in human life, but how I live my life doesn't matter.

Be admonished by the Word today. And then thirdly, is be assured. Be assured, is that you're never outside God's forgiveness. You have an advocate, one, who has forgiven you of all your sin.

Don't ever despair. Don't ever give up. Don't ever think there is no hope. Be admonished, be affirmed,! And be assured.

No, part of growing in the Lord is not becoming like Don Quixote. That is, where your life is out of balance.

[37 : 23] cross. For we look not to a windmill, we look as Christians to a cross. And it is there that we see not only the light of Jesus, but the darkness of our sin.

We are reminded of our failure, but we are also reminded of our forgiveness. We see how much we have broken God's law, and we see how much we are loved by God.

And that is the beautiful balance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you so much for the time in your word today.

Thank you for this balanced approach between being admonished to walk in the light and assured that when we do not, we have an advocate, we have a savior, a substitute in our place, the very one who is the light.

If there is someone today listening to this that does not know Christ, has not believed, I pray that today they would put their faith in him. And we pray it in his name.

[38 : 48] Amen. Thank you for worshiping with us today online. If you would like to contact Faith Family Church for any reason, reach out to us at ForTheGospelGatherings at gmail.com.

ForTheGospelGatherings at gmail.com. We would love to know how we can pray for you. If there's a decision that you would like to make and you would like to speak with someone regarding that, reach out to us and we would love to be able to minister to you.

Walk in the light as he is in the light. Thanks for worshiping with us today.