

# GOD IS LIGHT

## I John 1:5–10

### Introduction

One group of theologians translated verse 5 this way: “Now this is the gospel message we have heard from him and announce to you.”<sup>1</sup> I like the emphasis! John received the gospel message and passed it along. John summarizes the gospel in three words: “God is light.” If you have received the gospel, you have received the light. John is asking us this morning, “Where will you take the light?” There are (very likely) people at your job or on your street who have never heard a clear presentation of the gospel. They are living in darkness. You have the privilege to bring them light. Will you?

Verse 5 is built upon the foundation of verses 1–4. John said, “We have heard”<sup>2</sup> from Jesus that God is light. This message changed John’s life. He heard it a long time ago, but it was still ringing in his ears and coming out of his mouth.

Do you remember when you first heard the gospel? Is it still ringing in your ears? What about coming out of your mouth?

- Will you declare it to your buddy that you hunt and fish with?
- Will you declare it to that neighbor that you keep running into? They will stay in darkness unless you bring them the light.
- We do not share the gospel by accident. We share it intentionally. It is probable that, if you are not praying for opportunities to share the gospel, you are not sharing the gospel.
- Are we even taking advantage of the opportunities within our homes? Every time you read your children or grandchildren the Bible, you have just declared the gospel. When you kiss your child on the head and say, “God loves you,” you are declaring the gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 John 1:5 (New English Translation).

<sup>2</sup> Perfect tense means the message is still ringing in his ears. See Daniel Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, & 3 John* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2014), 16.

- Even in moments of misbehaving, we have opportunities to share the gospel. “Son, do you know why you are about to face this punishment? Because what you did was a sin, and sin always has to be paid for.”

You see, verse 5 is about taking the gospel to other people, but it is also about what the gospel does to those who have received it. We must never reduce the gospel to benefiting only the non-believers. You and I are desperately in need of the gospel. I will never forget hearing a man tell me one time that he was so happy that his preacher preached the gospel every Sunday morning because he knew many lost people may be in the building. He said, “You know I didn't need it. I am already saved, but I pray for others while he preaches.” That is a devastatingly erroneous view of the gospel. You are as much in need of the gospel today as the day you received Christ as your Savior. One day, I am going to preach a message entitled, “The Gospel for the Saved.” We only *come to Christ* by the gospel, and we only *grow in Christ* by the gospel. We need the gospel for salvation and sanctification.

**Mini Transition:** Let's read verse one again. Stop right here! GOD IS LIGHT! Everything else you find in this chapter indicates how God being light affects your life. Many people in the auditorium this morning would mentally agree that God is light, but do you know how that truth fleshes out in your daily life?

So let's fill up our concept of light. Light is a penetrating description of the being and nature of God. Light speaks of God's glory, His perfection, and His holiness. God does not just contain light or give light; He *is* light!<sup>3</sup>

*God is Light*—this is a popular theme throughout Scripture (95 times in the New Testament; 275 times in the Bible). The Old Testament says that God is light, and the New Testament says that Jesus is light. John came to bear witness of that light.

God wants us to know Him, so He uses a contrast of light and darkness. He uses a positive statement and a negative statement to describe God. John says, “God is light” (the positive), then “there is no darkness in Him” (the negative). We know God by who He is and who He is not.

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<sup>3</sup> Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 591–92.

When the Bible says there is no darkness in Him, God, through divine inspiration, uses a double negative. You cannot really see it in some English translations, but it says, “God is light, and in him is no darkness—none!” It is bad English grammar, but excellent theology. God’s holiness, moral purity, and goodness have no evil in them. There is no darkness in His person and no shadows in His character.

**Transition:** I want to give you three implications of how “God is Light” affects your life. Here is the first:

### **1. Because “God is Light,” there is no room for hypocrisy (verse 6).**

We find in this text five different scenarios that begin with the little word *if*. Three of the *if* statements introduce false doctrine (verses 6, 8, 10). Then John shows how the false doctrine affects someone’s life. Two of the *if* statements introduce true doctrine (verses 7, 9). Then John proceeds to show how that works out in someone’s life. Your doctrine always affects your life. What you believe determines how you act—always!

John weaves together five “if” clauses. They are conditional clauses that say, “If this were to happen, it would mean this . . .” In other words, every scenario I am about to introduce to you could actually happen and, sadly, does happen every day.

Here is the first case: a man is saying that he is a Christian but is not living like it. Have you ever encountered this? The word *walk* in verse 6 carries the idea of a continuous and consistent pattern of life—someone who habitually chooses to sin. Let me reveal to you who this person is: John uses the inclusive *we*, indicating not just John and the apostles, but anyone, anywhere, at any time, who takes this position.<sup>4</sup> If you say you have a right relationship with God and walk in darkness, you are a liar. Let’s bring this truth to our doorstep.

If we say we have a right relationship with God, yet . . .

- We are entertaining things in our minds that are reserved for within the bonds of marriage—we are lying.
- We are cheating on our taxes—we are lying.
- We are habitually having a divisive attitude at our jobs—we are lying.

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<sup>4</sup> Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 19.

- Day after day, we are fine with not reconciling the broken relationships in life—we are lying.
- We are disgruntled with everything and everybody in our lives—we are lying.
- We rip people to shreds with our mouths—we are lying.

My brother and I are seven years apart in age. When we were younger, we still slept in the same bed. It was a huge waterbed. My mother would progressively wake us up every morning. She would first open the door, then five minutes later call our names, then five minutes later turn on the light, then five minutes later pour water on my brother. One morning, my mother went through her typical routine: open the door, wait, call our names, then turn on the light. When she turned on the light, she started screaming. She looked at us, and our skin was pale blue. Our eyelids and lips and faces were blue. She thought we were dead. We heard the scream and jumped out of bed. Apparently, my mother had bought some new sheets (cheap sheets) and forgot to wash them before she put them on the bed. The dye was all over us. We took showers and could not even get it out. My mother thought everything was normal that morning until *she turned the light on*. You see:

- Light exposes everything!
- Light illuminates and interrogates!
- Light tears you up!

We do not like light. We want to establish the ground rules. We want to lay out the playing field. We want to provide our own definition of what is right and wrong, what is sin and what is not. BUT we do not get that privilege. Divine revelation set the bar for us.

You can say all you want, “I am right with God. I know God,” but your behavior contradicts your words.<sup>5</sup> The old saying rings true: “Your life is speaking so loud I cannot hear your words.” Your lips are saying, “I am a Christian,” but your life is saying, “I do not know God.” We are pulling the wool over everyone’s eyes; we are saying one thing and living another. But when we put our life up against the Light, it reveals the darkness. It shows the shadows. A property of light is truth—not hypocrisy.

- Light exposes everything!
- Light illuminates and interrogates!

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<sup>5</sup> Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 19.

- Light tears you up!

You see, friends, this passage shows you how “God is Light” works out into your life.

**Transition:** Because God is light, there is no room for hypocrisy, and . . .

## 2. Because “God is Light,” there is no room for denial (verse 8).

Those who live (“walk”) in darkness do not just lie to others, saying one thing and living another. Eventually, they lie to themselves. Their internal spiritual and moral compass goes haywire. They are self-deceived. Then they begin the trickery on themselves.

- “My sin wasn’t really sinful. It really isn’t that bad.”
  - “I can lie about what I make in tips—everybody does it.”
  - “I can continue this questionable behavior—everybody does it.”
- Stop the fancy word-smithing to try to get around your sin.<sup>6</sup>
  - “I know I am doing that, but that is not me. Sometimes I just turn into a different person.”
- Your clever rationale to diminish your sin is disgusting to God.
  - How do we deceive ourselves? We start to rationalize our sin. You begin to say, “It does make sense to \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank).”

Sometimes professing Christians even begin to flaunt their sin and celebrate it. “Hey, give me a chapter and verse that says I cannot do this. God doesn’t mind; just live a little. Hey, I can do this God-thing and still continue this sinful activity.” Friend, no you cannot. Downplaying the seriousness of sin is ultimately lying about light.

You see, there are people who downplay the seriousness of sin, and there are other people who deny they are sinners (read verse 8). This is a story of a man who thought he was good enough. He did not need Jesus. He lived a moral life, helped the poor, fought for his country, and took care of his family. I want you to remember something, church: there has never been anyone too bad for Jesus to save, but there have been millions who thought themselves too good.

John’s message is clear: You say you have no sin, but God says you do. You say you have no need of a Savior, but God says you do. Charles Spurgeon said, “You must be a stranger to your own heart, you must be blind to your own conduct every day, and you must have

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Davey, “Answering Life’s Ifs,” Colonial Baptist Church, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://media.colonial.org/files/PDFs/CBC/20130120-am.pdf>.

forgotten to search your thoughts and to weigh your motives, or you would have detected the presence of sin.”<sup>7</sup>

**Transition:** Because God is light, there is no room for hypocrisy, no room for denial; finally, . . .

### **3. Because “God is Light,” you must confess (verses 7, 9–10).**

Richard Hoefler, in one of his books, writes about Jimmy, a young boy who, along with his older sister, was spending a couple of days visiting their grandparents. While they were there, the grandparents gave Jimmy his first sling-shot. I have no idea what his grandparents were thinking; why not give him matches and gasoline while they’re at it! But they did tell him to play with it in the woods behind their house. He had great fun—taking aim and letting a little stone fly, he never hit one thing he aimed at.

On his way home for dinner, he cut through the backyard and saw his Grandmother’s pet duck. He took aim and let a rock fly. To his surprise, the rock hit the duck in the head and instantly killed it. The boy panicked, of course. In desperation, he took the dead duck and hid it behind the woodpile. As he turned to run into the house, he saw his sister Ashley standing over by the corner of the garage. She had seen everything. They walked into the house together, but she never said a word.

After dinner, Grandma walked into the kitchen and said, “Okay, Ashley, let’s clear the table and wash the dishes.” Ashley hollered from the dining room, “Grandma, Jimmy said he wanted to help you in the kitchen today; didn’t you, Jimmy?” And she whispered to him, “Remember the duck.” So Jimmy did the dishes.

Later in the day, their grandfather called the children to go fishing. Grandmother said, “I’m sorry, but Ashley can’t go. I need her to help me get supper.” Ashley smiled and said, “Jimmy actually told me he wanted to help with dinner tonight. Isn’t that right?” And she whispered, “Remember the duck.” This went on for several days. Jimmy ended up doing both his and his sister’s chores. Finally, he couldn’t take his imprisonment and guilt any longer, so he went to his grandmother and confessed everything. To his utter surprise, his grandmother took him in her arms and said, “I know. I was standing at the kitchen window and saw the whole

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<sup>7</sup> Charles Spurgeon, “Honest Dealing with God,” The Spurgeon Archive, accessed November 28, 2015, <http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/sermons/1241.htm>.

thing. And because I love you, I was already willing to forgive you several days ago—and I would never again have mentioned the duck.

The thief of our joy and the enemy of our soul and our own troubled conscience persists in whispering, “Never forget that moment when you sinned.”

Remember the duck:

- Peter – remember the rooster.
- Thomas – remember the doubts you expressed.
- Men – remember abandoning Me in my darkest hour.<sup>8</sup>

There is nothing Jesus can find out about you that He cannot cleanse and forgive. Do not be afraid to hold your life up to the light. No matter what you discover, Jesus Christ can cleanse every stain.

Notice the progression: in verse 6 we are lying to others, in verse 8 we are lying to ourselves, and in verse 10 we are lying about God. If you are not confessing your sin, you make God a liar. The phrase has the thought of looking God in the face and saying, “You’re a liar! You’re a liar! You’re a liar!” Confessing your sin says, “God, you’re a truth-teller. You’re the light!”

Confession means to say the same thing about our sin. You have to have a little schizophrenia for confession. It is taking God’s side against yourself.<sup>9</sup> “Self, I am agreeing with God on this one: what you are thinking or what you are doing or saying is nothing more or less than sin.” The phrase “cleanse us” suggests that God does more than forgive us; He erases the stain of sin. It suggests a continuous process.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

If you possess the light, you will feel the same way about sin as God feels. You will hate it. Do you find yourself hating sin or enjoying sin? It may be an evidence that you are self-

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Carl Hoefler, *Will Daylight Come? Background on the Miracles* (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing, 1979), 25.

<sup>9</sup> Sam Gordon, *Living in the Light: 1, 2, 3 John* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador, 2001), 46.

<sup>10</sup> Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 592.

deceived. Do you really have a personal relationship with Christ? John MacArthur preached on this passage and entitled the sermon “The Confession of Sin; the Certainty of Salvation.”

Non-believers conceal their sin. Saved people readily confess their sin. Like Adam, you like to cover your sin, but God gave you a conscience. A conscience is a gift from God to make you feel bad about your sin. Do not ignore your conscience this morning. Do not ignore God’s spirit this morning.

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