

1 John 1:5-10 (NKJV)

5 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.

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

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 Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Now remember last week we talked about joy? And John, in verse 4, tells us that he is writing to his readers that their joy may be full.

Now, what is the next thing you would expect John to say. "I write that your joy may be full." What would you guess his starting point would be in telling us **how to have this joy** and **how to remove the hindrances to it?**

How would **we** begin a discussion telling someone else how **they** can have joy, how they can have this wonderful fellowship with God?

How many of us would start by saying that the first thing you must understand if you are to have this kind of joy is that **God is Holy**.

And that is essentially what verse 5 is saying.

5 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.

Do you remember the story of the cloud that went before Israel as they travelled in the wilderness?

Exodus 13:21-22 (NKJV)

21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.

22 He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night *from* before the people.

God glowed. God was light. It was frightening and comforting at the same time.

And then when Moses received the 10 commandments

Exodus 34:29-35 (NKJV)

29 Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

30 So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

The people knew that Moses had been with a Holy God, a God of light, a God that was different than us. And that glory of God's holiness had an effect on Moses that was visible. The light rubbed off a little.

And then how about Jesus at the transfiguration?

Matthew 17:2 (NKJV)

2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

There we this **otherness of God**, this set apartness, this different-ness about Him. And it is striking. It leaves an affect. This is different than normal common human experience. Our God lives in unapproachable light.

1 Timothy 6:13-16 (NKJV)

13 I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,

15 which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power.

Amen.

We see this holiness of God, this otherness, this greatness. And it is supposed to have an effect on us. It is meant to shake us, to awaken us, to move us from our current position to a better one.

Paul says this in

2 Corinthians 4:4-6 (NKJV)

4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who

has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

God is light. And that light is to have a profound effect on us as humans. It is to change us completely. We can see that from the beginning of the Bible to the end of it. The light of God has shone on humans **that they may have life.** OK, so we go back to the transition between verses 4 and 5. John offers his readers hope. And then he moves immediately to the idea that God is completely and totally light and there is nothing that is not light in Him. God is completely and totally Holy and there is nothing that is not Holy in Him. God is completely and totally True, and there is nothing that is not true in Him. Ok. How is that supposed to give us joy?

John knew what we are slow to learn. The answers **about us** do not come from **the study of us.** The answers **about us** come from our **study of God.** The truth is that we know precious little about how we are to live by evaluating our lives. Frankly, we say “we can’t” and God says “you can”. We say “I won’t” and God says “you must”. We say “that path will make me miserable” and God says “that path will give you joy”. We say we want to have a salvation we can take some credit for and God says may it never be. Your salvation will be one that you cannot boast about a single thing.

Do you see what I mean. Our answers begin in our study of God. And it begins with the recognition of His otherness.

Martyn Lloyd Jones says that **“The first answer of the gospel can always, in effect, be put in this way: “Forget yourself and contemplate God” This, then, is “the message which we have heard from Him”; not that your needs and mine can suddenly be met by the gospel, but rather that “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” Immediately we start with God and not with ourselves”**

Joy, like most of the things we want in our lives, does not come in the way we would think it would come. The joy we can have in our Christian lives will never come by a **preoccupation with the pursuit of joy.** It will only come with a **preoccupation with Jesus.** That is why the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This immediately puts our lives into the proper perspective. We begin with worshipping the giver of the gifts instead of the gifts themselves.

When we start with **ourselves**, we are often hold God to a standard of how well He is **doing His part in making us happy**, in giving what we tell Him that **we must have** in order for us to be happy. Do you see the problem. An “I” centered Christianity is no Christianity at all. And it is destined to be joyless

and to have no fellowship. For a walk with Christ to have the effect in our lives that we want and need, **Christ** has to be the focus.

How many days and hours in our lives have we wasted in discontent and dismay because our salvation was based upon what **we wanted** and not **what God wanted**. How often have we responded to the circumstances in our lives in a way completely contrary to **trusting in the God of all circumstances** to have our circumstances covered?

The path to **joy to the full** begins with the recognition of who God is.

⁵ **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.**

Notice here too that there is nothing about the message being proclaimed by John that **John takes credit for**. It isn't a compilation of what John discovered about God as He contemplated the idea of God. No. John is obviously undermining any importance that he as a messenger has in the delivery of the message. A parrot could deliver the message. And it is **the message** that is so important, **not John's ideas** about the message.

This letter that John wrote is going to deliver these people into **the walk in Christ they should have**, into the **fellowship with God they should have**, into the **joy they should have**. It is offering **us** the same thing. But we have got to get one thing right from the start. The focus begins with God. All thought begins in who God is. God is the source of this salvation.

To live the Christian life requires a dethroning of our wonderful selves and a thron-ing of King Jesus. I think of the song we sing so often. **For there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.**

Now there are a few more things we can get from this idea of light. Light reveals truth. It displays it for all to see. It shines. It is obvious. Darkness is not really a thing. Darkness is just the absence of that which is light. It is like heat and cold. Cold is just absence of heat.

John MacArthur reveals a few more things about how the word light is often used in scripture.

“Scripture reveals two fundamental principles that flow from the foundational truth that God is light. First, light represents the truth of God, as embodied in His Word. The psalmist wrote these familiar words: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.... The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" ([Ps. 119:105, 130](#); cf. [Prov. 6:23](#); [2 Peter 1:19](#)). The light and life of God are inherently connected to and characterized by truth.

Second, Scripture also links light with virtue and moral conduct. The apostle Paul instructed the Ephesians, "You were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)" ([Eph. 5:8-9](#); cf. [Isa. 5:20](#); [Rom. 13:12](#); [1 Thess. 5:5-6](#)).

Those two essential properties of divine light and life are crucial in distinguishing genuine faith from a counterfeit claim. If one professes to possess the Light and to dwell in it—to have received eternal life—he will show evidence of spiritual life by his devotion both to truth and to righteousness."

I think this is important to understand in our study. John is dispelling the gnostic error in this epistle. And he skillfully uses the tools at his disposal to do so. So when John tells us that God is light, we will see how this is in direct contrast to that which is not light, that which is not true.

John MacArthur lets us know that **the light is truth** as found in God's Word and also that **the light behaves according to light**, it changes life into conformity of the truth. These are good things to know because we will see this theme of light again.

Let's look at what scripture tells us about how this light will change our behavior.

Matthew 5:14-16 (NKJV)

¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house.

¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

It is interesting that this passage does not tell us **we have** the light. It says we are it. As a believer, we carry it in our new natures. And it is comforting that we are never told to generate light. That is good because that would freak us out. We wouldn't know how to do that. No. It tells us we need to **act congruent** to who God says we are. Note again that it **starts with God**. He has shed His light into our hearts. He has given us new lives. The light is there because **He put it there**. Now we simply need to quit trying to hide it and just let it naturally exude from us as we live out the words of Christ.

Ephesians 5:8-10 (NKJV)

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as

children of light

⁹ **(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),**
¹⁰ **finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.**

Again, do you see it. We are not being told, work hard to be light. Nope. We **are light** in the Lord. Live not hiding it, don't be a hypocrite, don't act counter to what you really are. When I grew up I was taught, whether intentionally or unintentionally, that I owed it to God to pretend to be certain ways, painting a smile on my face, pretending to have all these Christian characteristics to an onlooking world. But I praise God it isn't that at all. I am free to be the new person that God has created me to be. I just need to stop trying to be something else and feed the self that God has created. I need to live by faith that I am a changed person, even though I see lots of evidence to the contrary. I need to walk as if something is true in the presence of all the other voices telling me that it is not.

Philippians 2:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ **that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,**

Living according to the light **does** require effort because our flesh, our old self wants nothing to do with being light. We still have the old self holdovers. So we have a battle on our hands. But it is not a battle to **pretend** to be something. It is a battle **live congruently** to what God says is true about us. And as we do that **we shine** like lights in the world.

Colossians 1:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² **giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.**

¹³ **He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,**

The world lives in darkness. It is their default setting. Light does not even look like light to them. Their condition is pitiable.

But we can thank God that **He did all the qualifying** for us to obtain the inheritance of the **light people**. It was **God** who delivered us from being under the power of darkness. Darkness can no longer make us do anything. It is no longer a legitimate excuse. We have the power to live in light because we are **in the light**. We were put into the light kingdom, the kingdom of the Son of God's love.

1 Peter 2:9 (NKJV)

⁹ **But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His**

own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

And here again we see that God called us out of darkness and into marvelous light. But it isn't just some mysterious light floating around somewhere, somehow. It is **God's** marvelous light. It is the light and life that emanates from God.

Now we cannot really close out this morning without looking at the Gospel of John.

John 1:1-13 (NKJV)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.

8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.

9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

We see very clearly in this passage that Jesus is the light. Jesus is the revelation of the light of God. Jesus was the life of God. Jesus was the source of life to man. The light revealed that life to man.

But we see the problem. People don't know, in their natural state, what to do with that light. The light was shining in the darkness. There was not a single thing wrong with the light, but the world did not understand it. They didn't know how to process it. They didn't know what to do about it. Because they

were in darkness. They couldn't make themselves see and understand. And we see the truth about all this in verse 13. **who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**

We find ourselves back at verse 5 in our text.

⁵ 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.

Our existence as believers comes back to who God is. And we start with the fact that **He is Holy. He is other. He is not us.**

John has successfully dethroned us and all of our objections to how God goes about things. He has muted the sound of our questions about the goodness of God and how He can allow such evil and suffering. He has removed the fatal assumption that we, in and of ourselves, **know anything** about what God is or what God should be. He has stricken human nature mute. And He has focused all the attention on what all of our attention should be focused on. **God.**

Now John has laid the foundation for us to learn something about God and how to properly relate to Him. We are prepared to drop all our ideas about **how we obtain joy** and lay those ideas at Christ's feet. We look at God in His Holiness and we orient properly.

We have heard from John that he is bringing a message from someone he heard and saw and touched among many witnesses. He is talking about a historical Jesus who lived as a human among them. He is bringing the message that this real Jesus, this real God in human flesh, **spoke**. And John is conveying it so we can have full joy and maximum fellowship with this God and His people.

Will we orient accordingly? Will we stop evaluating how well God is meeting our needs and come to Him looking to learn how we can better serve Him **in the circumstances that He has placed us in**? That is what John is calling us to this morning.

We can walk in the light as He is in the light.

John 8:12 (NKJV)

¹² Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

John is calling us to deeper walk in Christ. We would do well to look at our lives and ask the question, what things am I doing that are walking in darkness, walking **opposed** to the revealing light of Christ? Let's resolve to remove those things from our lives because they are completely inconsistent with our new identity, our identity of light. And let us look to the author and perfecter of our faith to find out how to really live a life of joy.