

# "Walking in the Dark"

John Chapter 1

## **"Walking in the Dark" 1 John chapter 1** **Pastor Tim Dodson January 25th, 2015** **at Jesus Fellowship of Believers,** **Menomonie Wisconsin**

1 John 1:1 *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things we write to you that your joy*

*may be full. 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.*

**Matthew 4:21-22. *Going on from there, He (Jesus) saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.***

When the apostle John was called by Christ he was found mending his nets. John was a mender. When John began to write these letters, the church had been in existence for several decades, and like now, time had subtly allowed apostasy to begin to creep in. Therefore there was a need of a voice to call people back to the original foundations and that voice would be the Apostle John. He would write these letters to call men back to the truth. Oh how we need John today! John had been ordained of the Lord to call us back, to mend the nets and to set things straight.

The tone of the John's writing herein is *paternal* both in the fatherly affection and in the fatherly authority which characterize it. The apostle John probably wrote this letter sometime around AD90 and probably wrote it from the city of Ephesus. John and his brother James were referred to by Jesus as "the sons of thunder." Although it seems their nature was calm and gentle, apparently when their patience was pushed to its limits their anger became wild and thunderous causing them to speak out like an untamed storm. These two brothers, along with Peter, were the 'inner circle' of Jesus' ministry. They alone were there at the raising of the Jairus' daughter, and at the transfiguration on the mount. At the last supper, we read how John, "the disciple that Jesus loved," was seated next to Jesus. John would follow Jesus into the audience with the high priest before his crucifixion, and was the sole apostle who remained at the cross while Jesus died. There is no doubt that John was special to Christ.

Secular history tells us that all of the apostles except John would die martyrs deaths. They did not get into this thing with some guarantee that theirs would be a 'Cinderella story.' They gave their all, even their lives. They understood, as we seldom do, that to be a real disciple is the surrender of everything to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There is records of attempts to kill John, including one to put him to death by placing him in a huge pot of boiling oil, and yet he lived. So why was John spared? While the apostles died when each of their missions in God's eyes was complete...just like it will be with all of us who seek to be disciples, John had the island of Patmos waiting yet for him. It was there that he would be banished, but not without pen and paper apparently, because it would be from there that he would pen the "revelation" of Jesus Christ. A letter that would have its manifest poured out 2000 years later. A letter to *us*...a letter that would have its reality expressed in our own day.

John would open this letter in a poetic highpoint. In the kind of prose that would grab the reader and send us immediately into top-of-the-mountain epic views of the valley below. Martin Luther spoke concerning this letter saying "I have never read a book written in simpler words than this one, and yet the words are inexpressible."

Speaking of the reality of Jesus and his experiences with him John says again:

*"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."*

John says we "heard Him"....we "saw Him with our own eyes"...we "touched Him." He was flesh and bone. He was a living being. And yet He was all God. John was testifying that it was all true...all that we have heard...all that we have come to believe. He was witness to this Jesus and all that He did, and he was writing this letter to declare it all as fact, so that we might be bound together with the apostles in unity and fellowship of brotherhood.

In verse 1 John lays out 5 facts:

- (1) Jesus Christ was from the beginning
- (2) We have heard Him speak
- (3) We have seen Him - we are "eye witnesses"
- (4) We have looked at Him closely and contemplated Him
- (5) We have touched Him-He was not a ghost, phantom or apparition, but a flesh and blood man.

Brian Bill (Walk the Talk) has a simple but accurate summary of John's profound prologue 1Jn 1:1-4...

- Christianity is fact, not fiction. (1Jn 1:1)
- Christianity is proclaimed, not private. (1Jn 1:2)
- Christianity is shared, not selfish. (1Jn 1:3)
- Christianity is rejoicing, not repressive. (1Jn 1:4)

How we can battle with all the ideas and concepts of faith, Christ, the Godhead and what it all means to us as His creation! And yet John takes us to the 'bottom line' of our stance with Him. Christ is real. He was here. John says "*We saw it all and witnessed the miraculous... we were there.*" Psalm 46:10 tells us to "*Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.*" Sometimes we can allow all of the convoluted ideas of our culture and the philosophical searchings of why, and 'how did that all work' to keep us from sitting at his feet and experiencing His presence! Christ has been placed under the microscope of doubt and submitted to the scalpel of human reasoning and earthly science. And why not? For if He and His claims are real and genuine, then our whole world is turned on its head.

**This letter will take many to task.** For in it, we will find a head on dealing with that which separates the professors from the possessors. John wants to be sure that while we are secure in our salvation, that we actually *have* salvation in the first place in which to be secure. For false security is one of Satan's greatest tools of way-laying those who believe intellectually but have never truly been reborn and thus the power and transformative aspects of rebirth are never known...never experienced. Thus the soul of some shall be lost for eternity because they never surrendered their life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Scripture is clear that even demons believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of humanity, but they will not be joining us in eternity.

Tom Wells (a pastor and respected Christian author) amplifies this warning to all evangelicals who would seek to accurately interpret and apply the important Epistle of First John...*"The first letter of John has often been used to create a contrast between two kinds of Christians. The contrast is put in the following ways: 1. Those who walk in the light, and those who do not. 2. Those who confess their sins, and those who do not. 3. Those who are worldly, and those who are not. 4. Those who abide in Christ, and those who do not. 5. Those who are overcomers, and those who are not. The point (of this letter) is to show that John is not thinking of different categories of Christians when he uses those divisions. It is very important to recognize this because the sustained contrast between Christians and non-Christians is the main theme of the letter. If we misapply it, we effectively pervert the teaching of the letter as a whole. Yet this has been done times without number...."*

John clearly wrote this letter to serve as the distinction between the believer and the non-believer. Ignoring this premise can have eternal ramifications! Quote: *Twentieth-century evangelicalism, on the other hand, has often used this book to distinguish between two categories of Christians. In my judgment this reflects one of our present-day misunderstandings of Scripture. It seems to me that Scripture is more concerned about whether we are genuinely Christians than it is about what kind of Christians we are. Modern evangelicalism has reversed this. I think that the reason is this: we have made becoming a Christian so easy that there is really no need to ask whether we are really Christians or not. This is sometimes referred to as **easy-believism**, and it appears to me to be rampant. But you need not accept my analysis of modern evangelicalism to see where the emphasis lies in 1 John. John would heartily join in Paul's admonition: "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith!" (2Cor 13:5-note)* (Some Pitfalls in Understanding First John - Banner of Truth Magazine, May, 1983)

Vs 4 tells us *"And these things we write to you that your joy may be full."* One can easily and wisely see that that one cannot be truly full of joy unless he or she is truly sure of one's salvation state. And frankly it is not enough to believe it, one must *know it*. Coming from a doctrinal position which I was taught and held unscripturally for years, this is of imminent importance to me. For I had all of the intellectual aspects of faith in my pocket, and yet I was never sure of where I stood...and my level and joy...not to mention success in the attributes of holiness and sanctification, was never consistent nor really even experienced.

John's words herein echo those of Christ in His "Upper Room Discourse" to His disciples the night before His crucifixion...*"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."* Those words were given right after Jesus spoke of our being a branch connected to Him; *the vine*. He remarked there that if we fail to remain connected ...fail to "abide in Him," we become the branch that is *"cast out...and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."* As we read those complete words of Christ, it becomes very clear that as we abide in Him, His joy abides in us. And it is inarguable that we cannot abide in Him unless we are indeed truly, absolutely, forever radically reborn as a new creature!

John will say in chapter 2, verse 26 that *"These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you."* (1Jn 2:26) Obviously people were and *are* out there who will try to deceive you. It is a sad reality in the world we live in! That is why we cannot simply believe what we are told and adhere to doctrines because a pastor somewhere told you such was fact. We must be what Paul called "good Bereans." Acts 17:11 *"Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."*

Verse 5 tells us that God is light, and possesses no darkness. Thus only "in the light" is there fellowship with God. If we walk in darkness, then we walk alone. When I say "walk", I am speaking of the living of our lives...the passage of our existence here on this earth. This is not to say that we never sin, and we never fall short. But doing so breaks our communion with the Father, and we find ourselves suddenly plunged into the realm of darkness where we can't see where we are going, we can't even see ourselves! We are therein called to repent, seek God's boundless forgiveness and effectively turn the light back on! Sin is like throwing a breaker.

But if we actually *live* in the dark, who would know any difference? If it is already dark, how would we know that anything is missing? But living in the light...being a "light-dweller," we know immediately something is wrong. I can't see anymore. I keep running into things and thus keep hurting myself and others.

So as we go along in this letter, we are going to spell out the signs of concern...the signs that I may be deceived as to my salvation state and that I may not be really redeemed at all. **So first one:** are you crashing about hurting yourself and hurting others? Maybe it's because there is no light in your life and it's just flat out dark. What else can we gather about darkness? Well, I can't read the signs, because I am blind in the dark. I can't read the signs of warning and the signs of direction. I'm just crashing about out there wrecking everything and hurting everybody. I'm not saying a life in the light is without pain. That would be swell, but not realistic. Jesus hurt, did He not? I have ran into things even in the light and smacked my shins! I'm talking about chaos. The messy chaos that manifests itself in the indiscriminate pain I endure because I don't know where I'm going and the kind that is vented upon others because of it. We know the difference don't we? Walking in darkness must, by the very Word of God, exclude us from the fellowship of Him "in Whom is no darkness at all."

Verse 6 and 7 says "*If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 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.*"

*"Now we have a test to determine who is and who is not in fellowship with the Father and so a test to determine who is and who is not a Christian, for only those who have fellowship with the Father are true Christians. The word "fellowship" in these verses has reference to positional fellowship, a fellowship which includes all believers but which excludes all unbelievers. Where we walk determines whether we are in positional fellowship with God; how we walk within this positional fellowship determines whether we are in experiential fellowship with God. (www.preceptaustin.org)*

In this last verses of this chapter, John clarifies that what he is saying is not that you and I will ever be without sin. We will indeed continue to "miss the mark." That's the meaning of the word 'sin.' But he is drawing a distinction between missing the mark in the light because we are generally lousy shots, and the *walking in darkness* which precludes missing the mark repeatedly and universally because I can't see the bull's-eye. In fact, I don't even recognize there *IS* a bull's-eye because it's dark! When we are redeemed, the light comes on, and we instantly acknowledge "oh...there it is." Suddenly our shooting is far more straight and accurate by simply being able to see the target.

From time to time I run into these 'sinless perfection' folks that believe that they no longer 'miss the mark.' It usually doesn't take long to establish the falsehood of such a myth. Charles Spurgeon once described a woman who claimed to be without sin and past sinning, until someone stepped on her toe, and as Spurgeon describes it "*her sinless perfection departed her like the morning dew.*" John Ker puts it this way... "*This is one of the sorest trials of a renewed life, that it is built over dark dungeons, where dead things may be buried but not forgotten, and where through open grating rank vapors still ascend.*"

**The fact is, we will forever in this life fall short.** That's why the boundless grace of Jesus is so important! Salvation is indeed a positional state of being, but it is also an ongoing transition. It has been said that "I *am* saved, I am *being* saved, and I *will be* saved!" Amen! But "in the light" we "*confess our sins, (and)He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" The bottom line is not "do you still sin," but ***are you walking in the light***, or are ***you walking in the dark***? Are you walking with Jesus, or is Jesus nowhere to be found due to the conditions of your street? We answer that by what happens when we sin: Do we reach for Jesus, or do we fumble for the door?