

God's Light And Love

1 John 2:7-14

7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. 8 At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. 9 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. 14 I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.
(1 John 2:7-14 (ESV))

A concern that I have had for some years now is that the trend within many evangelical churches seems to be toward giving more and more of their attention to the "practical application" of Christian concepts and principles, while spending less and less of their time preaching and teaching about God Himself. And I believe that there is an inherent problem within that trend.

So, as we begin this message for today, I would like for us to take the first moments to simply "think about" and to ponder the "Person" and the "Nature" of God! "What is it that makes Him different from you and me?" And so, I'll begin with the question . . . As you read these blessed scriptures that God has given within this Bible, do you listen carefully to His voice as He speaks through these words. Too often, I do not. I tend to read and I enjoy the general meanings that God gives, but then I move on quickly to the next verse.

But sometimes, and not often enough, I linger for a while and I listen to hear His voice. And it's in those times that I am able to hear sweet sounds I have never heard before, loving words of wisdom and of favor and of encouragement and of instruction, words of love and joy and peace and patience and kindness, a "voice" that calls me out from the tremors of daily life and tells me to "come and sit for a while with Him and enjoy intimate

communion with Him.” Thankfully, God has done that with me with these special words here in 1st John.

Early in the week, as I began to read and to study these words, I could hear the “Spirit of God” saying to me that I should put aside all the many difficult things of the day and come and “sit with Him for a while”, and “learn of Him”. As Jesus worded it in Matthew 11,

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)

Here, in these words of 1st John, God is reminding us of some very meaningful things about Himself, about His Divine Being and His Divine Nature. And then, He is reminding us about who we are, and what we should do with the things He tells us.

The first reminder about God’s Divine Being is that He is “light”, a concept and a meaning that doesn’t immediately resonate with us, and most ordinary minds quickly pass right on by it. And I have done that so many, many times before. But, this time, as I “tarried with Him” for a while and pondered the thought of Him being “light”, I found that a “pleasant delight” began to enter into my soul.

I thought, “Lord, I know about ‘light’, but I don’t know about ‘Your Light’. What do you want me to know about ‘Your Light’?”

And while, God doesn’t speak “out loud” to me, though I wish so much that He would, He did make me to hear some things. First, that His “light” is more than about illumination and brightness, though He is that also. But even more, His “light” expresses the nature of His Being.

To simply say that He is different from you and me is not adequate enough words. God is singularly different, so different that only the unction of the Holy Spirit can make us to understand how important that differentness is. His differentness sets Him apart from you and me and from all things “created”, all things that “exist”.

And that is so important to know. Because in our desire to comprehend God, instead of our being willing to “step up” towards Him, our rational minds tend to try to bring Him and His ways down to our level, to make Him more like us. But He isn’t! He isn’t! God really is, in every way, different from us “created creatures”. And His use here of this word “light” is one way of helping us to comprehend that differentness.

Existing things, by their nature are physical and are perishable. They have a “life-cycle”. They age, they deteriorate and they die. But God’s Being never ages, never deteriorates, never corrupts. He is “Spirit” and He is “Light”. And with no possibility of deterioration within His Being, He simply always and eternally “IS”. That is why He could say to Moses, “My Name is I AM”. “I AM THAT I AM”. God IS, always has been and always will be, forever and ever and ever.

And the brilliance of His “perfect light”, in which there is no darkness at all, expresses perfect purity and perfect holiness and perfect righteousness, without even one spot, stain, wrinkle or blemish, without even one thought or behavior or response that has a fault or error within it.

And there is unimaginable “power” within God’s nature and His “light”, “power” that can create, as He did in the beginning with the heavens and the earth. But “power” that can also destroy, in a moment, in an instant, as He will surely do at the “end of days” when He finally and completely destroys this earth and everything in it.

Recall also, the words of Exodus 33:20, where God said to Moses,
20 "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"
(Exodus 33:20 (NASB))

There is an extreme “severity” that is present within God’s Divine purity and holiness and “light”. Realizing that truth helps us to better understand the warning that He gave to Moses there in Exodus 33. If Moses had seen God “directly”, the brilliance and power of God’s “light” would have immediately “burned up” Moses’ fleshly body. And for that reason, God took great precautions to protect Moses from seeing Him “directly”, hiding Moses in the cleft of a rock and only permitting Him to see a glimpse of the “light” of His back side.

Folks, our God is so pure and so holy and so righteous that nothing, in all existence, can bear to withstand the power of the “white-hot holiness and purity and righteousness” that pours forth from the “light” of His being.

And realizing all of that helps me to understand why nothing “unholy” will ever be able to enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Too many people want to believe that “because God is love”, He will somehow “look beyond” their sinful ways and will relent and let them come into heaven. But not so! Not so! If any person were allowed to step foot into God’s heavenly presence without having first been cleansed completely from every sin

by the blood of Jesus, the “light of God’s white-hot holiness” would immediately obliterate them.

We must first be “changed” from this earthly body into a “heavenly body”, one that has not even one impurity of sin remaining within it, washed perfectly clean by the blood of Jesus. As we are told in 1 Corinthians 15,

50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

(1 Corinthians 15:50-53 (ESV))

God is pure and He is Holy. And for us to enter into His presence, we too must be pure and holy. And the only way for anyone to be pure and holy, they must first be washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

. . . Pondering God and His being and His ways, as we are doing here today, is so precious to me personally. But some would ask, “is it really necessary for me to go to these “depths”? Can’t I just go through my life simply trusting God to save me? And yes, a person may be able do that and still get into heaven. But folks, that is not God’s desire for you and me. He wants each of us to truly “know” Him, and not to just “know about” Him.

And perhaps such reluctance is part of the “great apostasy” within the church today. Many church goers are content with only knowing “about” God and never venturing to “really know Him” intimately.

And that should not be. Our God is a wonderful and amazing God. And He really is pure and holy and righteous. And if we ever hope to be eternally in His presence, we really do need to be more than just “mildly interested” in who He is.

By Him telling us here that we are to “walk in the light as He is in the light”, He is saying to us that we are going to need to get up real close to Him and learn what His “Nature” is all about. And “up close” is where that “white-hot” light of His holiness is. And if we aren’t prepared for that kind of “life-changing power”, we will surely “burn out” in our attempts to be a Christian.

But listen! If we will be willing to do what God is asking here, that we “live in” and “walk in” a right relationship with Him, He will bring us blessings beyond measure, “joy unspeakable”. So why then would we not want, with all our hearts, to do it. This word tells us that in Him, in His light, there is no darkness at all. None of the misery, none of the corruption that is so common to those who walk in the darkness. As we walk, up close to Him, only perfect light and goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives. And as I have said so many times now, walking in His “light” gives us the ability to see things and hear things and do things that we have never done before and would not even imagine doing otherwise. We will have wisdom and insight beyond our natural abilities.

And above all else, we will be able to “love”, to love God and to love the people around us as we really should. Recall again, that the “first and greatest commandment” from God requires that you and I “love”, that we love Him intimately and personally, with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength”, and the second is like unto it, that we “love all the people around us, even as Christ loves them, our family, our neighbors, our friends, our co-workers, our business associates, even strangers.

Now, here again, if we will stop and linger on these words, as we did in our consideration about God’s light, the Holy Spirit, who is part of that wonderful “light of God”, will tell us things that we would never have known otherwise. Things such as how this “command to love” can actually become a “doable thing” for us, that if we will listen for and respond to the “voice” of the “unction” that the Holy Spirit gives, His “unction” will enable us to “love”.

Think about that for a moment. As we said in an earlier message, our concept of how we are to love our fellow man is often so “shallow”, especially when it comes to those people who are just outside of our close knit or family relationships.

We spoke last week about the love of a mother for her child and the love that can be enjoyed between a husband and wife. But when we consider all the many other people we encounter and rub shoulders with each day, there are a lot of other people that God wants us to love, people we barely know, but especially some people that we do know, but really wish we didn’t have to know.

But as we’ve been saying, God only gives one option when it comes to loving people. We must do it! We have to love them. And that is the reason why you and I must stop and get really quiet before the Lord and listen for His Spirit to come to us. And He will! And when He comes, He will tell us things about love that we never knew before.

Listen to these words again, and let's allow God to speak to us.

7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. 8 At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. 9 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. (1 John 2:7-11)

As we have said in earlier messages, this “darkness” spoken about here is filled with all the wrong things. And when we walk around “blindly” within it, very wrong things keep taking place. From the Book of Ephesians, we know that the “darkness” is filled with “evil demonic beings”, described there as powers and principalities and forces of evil. That is why these words so strongly admonish you and me to get out of that darkness, into the safety of God's light. We cannot co-exist with the darkness and succeed at anything that is good. It just will not ever happen.

And our ability to love other people, many of them who still live and walk within that darkness, is part of the “test strip” that God wants you and me to use. But to do that, we ourselves must first step out from that darkness into God's enabling light. It is only while we are abiding in His light that we can love those other people. And it is only through the indwelling power of God's Holy Spirit that we will be able to do any of it.

Folks, I implore us to open our hearts to this “Third Person of the Trinity”, the Holy Spirit. Talk to Him personally! “Nuzzle” up closely to Him and listen for His “voice”. You can do that. He is the “Spirit of Christ”. He loves you and wants you to know Him and to love Him. And as you draw closer to Him, you'll find that the light of God will enable you to get on past barriers and difficulties, and will enable you to begin to love and to care for people in ways you never knew before.

I'll close with an assurance given in chapter 5 of this Book.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (1 John 5:2-4 (NASB))