

Walking in the Light

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Light is often used to convey hope. Tolkien: *May it be a light to you in dark places, when all other lights go out.* MLK *Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.* But in the new Batman movie light is used differently. Commenting on the bat signal Bruce Wayne says: *When that light hits the sky, it's not just a call. It's a warning.* When John says: *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all* is it a call or a warning? An invitation or a caution? Notice the double negative. *No* darkness "at all," literally: *none*. No darkness none, not a shadow, a shade, a spec. God is pure light, very light of very light. So if we're living in the light, it's an invitation, but if we're walking in darkness, it's a warning. This imagery is *meant* to awaken a response. How does God want us to respond? Three *if we say* statements show us: *relational* (fellowship), *moral* (sin), and *theological* (God).

Relational

Relationships. *I just want a good friend. She never texts me; I'm the one that always texts her. I just want a dude to hang with. Nobody gets me.* Relationships can be a roller coaster. But what if there was a relationship so satisfying, so secure, so deep it made us less up and down about other relationships? It's called *fellowship*. Fellowship isn't just sharing good times; it's sharing gospel things (truth, light, Christ). God's heart is for us to so delight in gospel things that we're cemented to him and one another. So he warns us: *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth* (6). How do we fellowship? There's a way not to and a way to. Way not to: **walking in darkness**. If we walk in the darkness, we cannot enjoy fellowship with God. Why? Light and dark are opposites. When you turn on the light in a dark room, wherever there is light there is no darkness. Like light and darkness, God and sin can't commingle. So if we wander off into the dark we step out of fellowship with God. Doesn't mean you lose your salvation; it means you lose your fellowship. *Sometimes we feel the truth of this.* You click into porn and you feel the darkness pulling you away from the light; you let your anger rip on someone then feel the despondent afterwards; you envy what others have but feel the dissatisfying aftertaste. Darkness drives us from the light. Why? Because in the dark we cherish base things (lust, anger, envy) not gospel things. Sin put us out of the light. *But*

other times, we do not feel the darkness. We lie and do not practice the truth. That's the thing about the darkness—it's dark, deceptive. It tells you a little porn is okay because you're single or unhappily married. It convinces you that your spouse or friend deserved your anger because of how they treated you. It justifies envy because, you've suffered more, worked harder. Darkness deceives, creates distance from God and one another. How do we get back? We **walk in the light**. How do we walk in the light? *as he is in the light*. It's a call, an invitation *into Christ not just to Christlikeness*. Not just being *not* lustful, angry, or envious but *being with Christ*. Where is Christ? *In the light*. So to enjoy his satisfying presence, to experience his truth, we have to go where he is. A fisherman doesn't go to the land to catch fish; he goes toward the sea. So also a Christian doesn't look to the darkness, busyness for fellowship but moves toward the light. We fellowship in prayer, but often we are distracted, even bored with his word. What do we do? The filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky is known for panning slowly across a room, focusing on an object. He did this knowing the audience would grow impatient, bored, but that if he did it long enough they would really begin to see what they were looking at. Maybe you need to sit still enough to get bored, ask God to break through the boredom to see Christ, to enjoy his fellowship. It's true for me. I pray and duties come to mind. I jot them down or push them the side. I go for a walk and leave my phone at home. I listen for the breeze, the birds, and the world begins to fall away, and a tunnel of fellowship emerges as I talk to God. *To walk in the light is to not only to return to Christ but to fellowship with one another: if we walk in the light we have fellowship with one another. Renewal overflows into relationship.* I'm reminded of a father who harbored a sin for years. He felt dirty, a disgrace to his family, dodged Sundays and City Group. But after he dragged his sin out into the light, he began to feel clean, to serve his family, and got much more involved in church. The darkness will tell you don't belong, you're too dirty. But Jesus says, Come out of the shadows, step into my light. I'll cleanse you, forgive you, and welcome you back into my fellowship.

Moral

If God is light, he not only affects our relationships but our morals. The second *if we say* statement: *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*. How might we say we have no sin? A couple ways. First, by **redefining sin**. You ever find

yourself avoiding sharp categories like sin and righteousness. Culturally, racism is considered a heinous sin, which it is, but cursing, lusting, and ranting are often applauded. Do you smirk about these sins but get up in arms about racism? Then you have redefined sin. Why would we do this? Maybe because we are socially rewarded for agreeing with cultural conceptions of sin but penalized when we disagree? Our neighbors and coworkers may accept us more if we curse, joke about lust, and rant about the cultural sins, but snub us if we choose edifying language, sexual integrity, and peacemaking. How do *you* make moral decisions? If you're living for cultural rewards who's your god— culture or Christ? A second way we say we have no sin is by **rationalizing sin**. Recall our earlier examples: a little porn is okay because you're single or unhappily married; your anger is justified because of how someone treated you; envy of others things is justified because you suffered more or work harder. But John says, [we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us](#). The truth is not present in any of these rationalizations. God is pushed to the side by self-deceit. That should scare us. We sin not because someone twists our arm, or mistreats us, but because we believe a lie instead of the truth. We lust because we believe viewing porn is more satisfying than walking in the light. But when you're done, satisfaction swirls down the drain and you're left in the dark. We rant because we believe blowing off steam will bring us peace, but it just leaves us ticked and peaceless. Darkness deceives; it does not practice the truth. The verse literally reads: *do the truth*. Christianity is *truth done*. It isn't a mere worldview to affirm or deny, a set of doctrines to agree or disagree with. *Christianity is practiced truth. We often restrict truth to the realm of the rational, cognitive, doctrinal, but true truth is also behavioral, moral; it is done*. Kierkegaard: *A doctrine is not truly known until it is truly lived*. You can doubt from the armchair all day but you don't really know it until you walk out on the limb. Until you give yourself over to it. Anger. Early in marriage I would get extremely angry calling my wife names and ripping my t-shirts because she wouldn't go emotionally deep with me (I wonder why!). But eventually God convinced me to trust him for the emotional intimacy I was longing for. [God is love](#), 1 John 4:8, so I invited that truth in. I walked out on the limb and asked God to love me the way I wanted my wife to love me. And when I gave myself over to his love, his providence, his timing, I discovered new depths of his love that freed me to love my wife as she was not as I wanted her be. That's how the truth gets in: by giving ourselves over to the it, walking out on the character

and promises of God. But when we redefine or rationalize sin, we invite deceit, turn our back on fellowship with God. And when we do that, God gives up on us. No: *he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness...if we confess our sins*. What sin do you need to confess to the Lord? What sin have you rationalized, redefined for cultural approval? Step back into the light, where Jesus faithfully and justly forgives and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. *Just as there is no spec of darkness in God, he forgives every spec of darkness in us.*

Theological

God is light. A call and a warning meant to awaken relational, moral, and theological purity. How we respond says something about God. The passage gives us two options. The final *if we say* statement: *If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us: God is a liar*. Verse 5: *God is light*. What will your response say about God? If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar. And if God is a liar, the morality of the universe unravels. There are no absolutes. Anything goes. Live for cultural approval. But, if God is light the universe is not only moral, it is theological. And by that I do not mean conceptual; I mean *personal*. This passage repeatedly emphasizes the personal nature of God: *we have fellowship with him; he is in the light; he is faithful and just; his word*. We confess our sin *to a person* with a face, hair, eyes, and teeth. 2 Cor 4: the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in *the face* of Jesus Christ. We have offended *him*, the light in whom there is no darkness, none. Don't we tell our kids to look one another in the face and say *I'm sorry*? How much more should we confess our sins *with hope* before the face of God? Treat *him* as a person. *He* is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness. The Father, Spirit, Son are calling us into the glory of his blessed fellowship.