

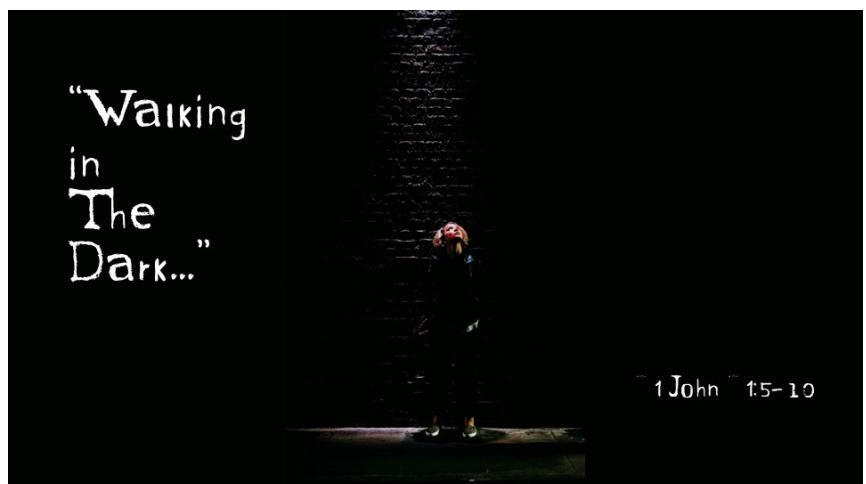
"Walking in the Dark..."

1 John 1:5-10 on February 1, 2026
by Pastor Tim Dodson at
Jesus Fellowship of Believers,
Menomonie, Wi

1 John 1:5-10

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.



It's our second visit to this letter, and the apostle now jumps in with both feet. After having declared that "*he was there*"...that he had *seen* Jesus, *heard* Jesus, and even *touched* Jesus, John now brings to the table the "message" that the apostles had been given by Jesus to deliver to us. John declares what this first hand contact with Christ presented, that "God is light," and moreover possesses "no darkness in Him at all." Such a declaration can be...*and frankly often is*, acknowledged and immediately set aside, without grasping the incredible ramifications that such a statement carries. Both this letter and other passages emphasize this clarity that God is perfect and only perfection can therefore approach Him.

Often people see this as the impossible standard. And yet no one can argue with the scriptures...certainly the likes of Matthew 5:48's command, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*". Because God is "utterly pure," He will not be in the presence of that which is "less than" pure. His presence is often described as actually dangerous to anything unholy. In the Old Testament, this necessitated veils, mediators, and specific sacrifices to allow imperfect people to remain engaged with Him without being "consumed" by His absolute moral purity.

Thankfully...the gospel message also sets forth something called "Imputed Perfection." Such is a core tenet of both the cross and the effect of the redemption of mankind which followed. The premise is that since humans cannot achieve such perfection on their own, God would provide it as a gift...out of His innate love for mankind. This was not just done by kingly edict...for that would lay aside justice, and our God is also a "just" God. We were undeniably guilty. Justice had to occur. Someone had to pay.

Thus through the gift of righteousness via Christ and the cross, believers are "reckoned" or "counted" as perfect by the Father, because Jesus was and has, "met the standard" on our behalf. Meaning that God now chooses to "see" us as perfect (positional sanctification) because of Jesus stepping in on our behalf. This is, *of course*, great news for us. Yet anyone who has any wits about them knows that no one has achieved sinless perfection in the "practical" realm; we refer to this honest reality as "practical sanctification." This act of God has been subsequently stretched, molded, and shaped into something profoundly different than what scripture tells us it is. We have made it something very convenient and worldly freeing.

Many people will pass through our company looking not the truth...not for the true light, but rather a church that will confirm what they personally believe...where they individually stand. They want...further, they will not stand for, no other position and teaching other the one that confirms what they believe, and it seems to

matter little that scripture itself is contrary to their positions. Thus they move on...and keep looking, albeit in the darkness of a walk apart from the presence of God.

In the original Greek, the word for "perfect" (teleios) actually carries more than just the idea of absolute and innate flawlessness. It goes further in that meaning, adding to it the ideas of being complete, mature, and "reaching an end-goal." Therefore, this positional standing with God is not the end game in and unto itself...meaning it doesn't begin and end there. Rather such is the catalyst and empowerment to *respond*...to *reply*... to *answer in kind*. Thus, considering this fact, God is calling us...*and expecting us*, toward spiritual maturity...a reciprocal relationship, and a wholeness of commitment and practical living, rather than expecting us to never make a mistake! Furthermore, through the Holy Spirit, he is empowering us to succeed at this effort.

This idea of perfection as an emphatic position ...on any level...can tend to cause us to flinch in our day and in our social dynamic. After all, our culture fosters the premise of "operation in grays." We cultivate and even promote a world where there is flexibility...wiggle-room...a malleable leeway in just about every aspect of scripture and our living. Honesty...morality...truthfulness...priority, and of course, our *spirituality*.

We know what the scriptures say...particularly in *this* fellowship! We know the emphatic nature...the "black-and-white" aspect of many biblical directives. We know... "seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt 6:33) ... "love the Lord God with *all* you heart, and *all* you soul, and *all* your mind..." (Matt 22:37)... "If you love your father or mother *more than you love me*, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine (Matt 10:37)... and many others. We know there is no innate flexibility in directives such as these, but being naturally daunted by such, we therefore simply attach an addendum providing merit for our best intentions and "credit for verbal affirmation." We take the position of "yes, *I hear you...but I can't do that...I have work to consider...I have other stuff in my life...I have kids.*"

John says that "God is Light" and then for emphasis and clarity says... "*in him is no darkness at all.*" Once again...there is no wiggle room...no gray...no nuance. He is ALL Light. Therefore, only "in the light" is there fellowship with God. John takes the *event* of salvation's sanctification, and pulls it back into the *effect* of that salvation's sanctification ...back into our actual and honest walk of faith. If we walk in darkness, then we walk alone. When I say "walk", I am speaking of the living of our lives...the real action of our existence here on this earth. This is not to say that we never sin, and we never fall short. But we must know that 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, and we can't even see ourselves! We are therein called to confess our subsequent "post-salvation" sins...repent, seek God's boundless forgiveness, and effectively turn the light back on!

I was remarking the other day that, while I am certainly not a fan of traditional Catholicism for I am aware of some innate scriptural problems with their doctrine, I think they ...on some level anyway...bettered the evangelical world with their focus on confession. Maybe its *too* much of a focus, but there is **no** focus in the modern evangelical church on confession whatsoever! We mention it in passing, but only as part of the "event" at the beginning of the salvation race, not as an on-going aspect of our walk in Christ. The apostle points out in verse 9 that God is "...*faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" And that is indeed a cause to celebrate, but please note that such an action comes with a "qualifier." It says "**IF we confess our sins...**" Thus it is no stretch to understand that if **we don't**, **He don't!**

We have added a "flexibility" to God's Word and directives that so often simply does not exist. One of these "exemptions" is confession. We know we fall short and sometimes stumble in sin. That part is a fact and is acknowledged as such. But then we go on to add a little something to the recipe, which is that when sin happens we can simply forget it...sweep it under the rug...or maybe at best, feel "sorry" about what we did. But what happened to confession and repentance? If confession and repentance do not occur, we are effectively *still holding onto the sin and still holding on to its guilt!* While I would never insinuate that such an act would get

you kicked out of the club, it would...*it will*, break fellowship with your redeemer who died to rid you of such sin, and your God who is perfect...is "light" ...will not acquiesce to the darkness that is in your back pocket.

Psalm 66:18 states with clarity... "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.*" If I don't get that, the Living Bible steps up for even more clarity: "*If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*" Well...ouch! John is venturing down a rather dangerous road here...wherein he is bound to ...in some cases...lose some support if not some friends, because he is essentially calling these folks out!

Isa 1:15 "*When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.*"

Prov 28:9 (NLT) "*God detests the prayers of a person who ignores the law.*"

How does this all escape our radar? How is it that we are missing this element of practical sanctification and practical living? It's really a rather simple premise. It's because for many of us, we want redemption, but we also want to still walk in the dark. We want heaven, but we don't really want to give up our sin. So we "look the other way" figuring...*or at least hoping*, that God is doing the same. Indeed, we are compelled to point out here...while not condemning any particular individual, that we if we remain entrenched in a sin, scripture...*here in 1 John and elsewhere*... is going to reject your claim of Christianity. The apostle in chapter 3 of this letter is going to say "*But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning.*" John is going to paint a very clear picture in this letter between the living of an authentic born again believer...and the church-going religious person who will ultimately be lost because they ultimately never surrendered their lives or their sin!

It is easy to think that if we actually live in the dark, who would know any difference? After all, if it is already dark, how would we know that anything is missing? How would anyone know? But living in the light...being a "light-dweller," we know immediately something is wrong. If the lights go out, 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, the 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 aimlessly wandering about out there with no destination or direction.

Now 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! No, I'm talking about chaos. The messy chaos that manifests itself in the indiscriminate pain I both endure and meet out upon others around me because I don't know where I'm going or really what I'm doing at all. We know the difference, don't we? I have known a lot of Christ-confessing individuals who have essentially burned villages and hurt so many people and are seemingly ok with having done so. Cruel, dishonest, abusive folks that have no issue with such. 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." Note it is not "you *can* have fellowship with one another...but you genuinely *have* fellowship with one another." "Fellowship with others" is a by-product of walking in the light. Blowing up others is not fellowship.

"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."

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In the last verses of this chapter, John clarifies that what he is saying is not that you and I will never be without sin. We will indeed continue to "miss the mark." That's the actual 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 must "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 actually 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?