

Walking in the Light

1 John 1:5-2:2

Light & Darkness

“Light” and “darkness” are universal symbols in human experience and thought. In his writings, John frequently uses the contrast of light and darkness with the following general meanings:

	Light	Darkness
<i>Intellectual/Experiential Realm</i>	Revelation, Knowledge, Truth	Ignorance, Error
<i>Moral/Ethical Realm</i>	Righteousness, Purity, Goodness	Evil, Impurity, Badness

- “Light” in the intellectual/experiential realm is directly related to “light” in the moral/ethical realm. Jesus said, *“Everyone who does evil hates the light ...But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light” (John 3:20-21).*
- “Light” is directly associated with “life” (*John 1:4; 8:12*).

God is Light

Read 1 John 1:5. The essence of God is characterized by “light.” Jesus Christ was the incarnation of divine light for humanity. Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world” (John 8:12, 9:5).*

What About Us?

Read 1 John 1:6-10. These verses may be summarized and organized as follows:

“If we claim ...”	Then ...	But if we ...	Then ...
to have fellowship ¹ with God yet walk in darkness ² (v.6)	we lie and do not live by the truth (v.6)	walk in the light (v.7)	we have fellowship with one another; and the blood of Jesus ³ purifies us from all sin (v.7)
to be without sin (v.8)	we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (v.8)	confess our sins (v.9)	he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (v. 9)
we have not sinned ⁴ (v. 10)	we make God out to be a liar, and his word has no place in our lives (v. 10)		

¹ “fellowship” means “having in common, sharing, participating together.” Fellowship involves a good relationship.

² Those who “walk in darkness” avoid, reject, or fail to respond to God’s illumination and guidance, and so live in sin. The apostle Paul asked, “what fellowship can light have with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14b)

³ The “blood of Jesus” refers to Christ’s death (atoning sacrifice) for our sins, necessary for forgiveness of sins.

⁴ God’s word says, “all have sinned” (Romans 3:23) and “there is no one who does not sin” (1 Kings 8:46). “Sin” may be defined as “any action or attitude opposed to the nature and will of God.”

1. As this passage states, we cannot claim to have fellowship with God if we “walk in darkness.” We must “walk in the light.” How do we “walk in the light?” What attitude is required? What actions are needed?⁵

“But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light” (John 3:21)

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and light for my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

2. What does it mean to “confess our sins?” How is confession of sins related to fellowship with God? How might this apply to the daily life of the Christian?

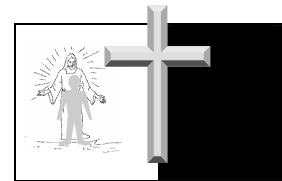
The Light of the World

While forgiveness of sins is available through Christ, this does not give us permission to sin! Read 1 John 2:1-2. John says, “I write this to you so that you will not sin” (2:1a). But knowing that everyone does sin, John also shares God’s gracious provision for restoration. Jesus Christ is the “atoning sacrifice”⁶ for our sins,⁷ and the believer’s “advocate”⁸ with God the Father.

Outside Christ



Position “in Christ”



Note: As followers of Christ, we have been rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light (*Colossians 1:12-13*). Once in darkness, we are now “light in the Lord” (*Ephesians 5:8*). However, in this present age, we still live in this dark world, and we still struggle with our old darkened nature. Thus we look forward to the age to come, when the kingdom of light is consummated.

Reflection/Application

- Are you experiencing fellowship with God? Are you “walking in the light?” What do you need to do to enjoy fellowship with God? Consider John 3:19-21, 8:12; Ephesians 4:17-5:20.
- Is there sin in your life that you need to confess? Go to the Light.

⁵ “Walking in the light” does not require that we live morally perfect lives, because this is impossible (1:8-10). However, fellowship with God does require that we be purified.

⁶ “atoning sacrifice” is translated from Greek ἱλασμός, which is more literally translated “propitiation.” God’s holiness demands punishment for sin. Christ’s death (on our behalf) satisfied the holy wrath of God, and provided a way of forgiveness of sins. This “propitiation” is not like the pagan sacrifices to angry, capricious gods. “It is an appeasement of the wrath of God by the love of God through the gift of God” (Stott, 93).

⁷ Christ is “the atoning sacrifice . . . for the sins of the whole world.” This does not mean that all sins in the world are automatically forgiven, but forgiveness is offered to all, and realized by those who embrace it through faith in him.

⁸ “one who speaks . . . in our defense” is how the NIV paraphrases the Greek πρὸς ἀκλήτος, which may be translated “advocate, mediator, intercessor, helper.” By “speaking in our defense,” Christ is not attempting to excuse our guilt. Rather, as the “Righteous One,” he is interceding for believers on the basis of *his* righteousness.