

## INTRODUCTION

One of my Favorite hymns is "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms." For a long time I felt that song was about the kind of fellowship between people. But you're not leaning on the arms of the person beside you and if you are, they're not everlasting arms. Only God's arms are everlasting and it is possible to have fellowship with God.

1 John 1:5-7. "This is the message we have heard from him and we declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by 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, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

As we think about our fellowship with God, there are two words I want you to keep in mind, the first is the word "relationship," second is the word "fellowship." Our relationship with God is established when we become a Christian, when we are born into the kingdom of God. What is our relationship? According to the Bible, God is our father and we are his but I'm not talking about that relationship right now. I'm talking about being in right fellowship with God. That's what this passage is all about.

## I. THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." The foundation of our fellowship with God is found in verse five and it is based upon not who we are, not upon our nature, but that our foundation is based upon the nature of God. The Bible doesn't say God has a light and it doesn't say he is like a light, but that God IS light.

### A. Physically, light refers to God's glory

What does it mean when the Bible says God is light? There are at least three ideas there. First, it refers to God's glory physically-speaking. There's a beautiful word used in the Old Testament in the Hebrew called the Shekinah glory of God. It was a word used to describe the literal radiating presence of God, the brilliance of God. In the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, when God showed up, things brightened up. In Genesis 1 when there was nothing but void and darkness, the Hebrew language literally says that all God said was, "Light, be." And there was light. When God showed up there was light and then even throughout his creation and through his relationship with the children of Israel, we see his Shekinah glory.

In Exodus, when the Israelites build the tabernacle in the wilderness and offered the sacrifice the bible literally says there was a light, fire that fell from heaven and a fiery pillar that led them through the wilderness. That brilliance is the Shekinah glory of God. When Moses went up on the mountain, he wanted to see God but God said he glory was so great that Moses would die if he saw it. Instead God told Moses he would pass by him and show him the afterglow. The Bible says Moses was allowed to see the Shekinah glory of God. No man has seen God, but he saw an afterglow. As a result, Moses came down and his skin he looked like he had been to Florida for

three weeks out in the sun with no sunscreen. His face literally glowed. I imagine he was almost sunburned. That's literally what happened: He glowed with the presence of God.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," (John 8:12) Light is an amazing thing that's hard to understand. I'm not surprised that God chose light to express himself. We've all heard about who have clinically died and upon resuscitation, nearly all report seeing a bright light. That doesn't mean all of them are going to go to heaven. I believe if they are correct at all—and I don't even know if they are—that everybody's going to have to face God. Isn't it amazing that that's what those people describe as having seen?

Light is the only constant in the universe according to Einstein. In fact, when he wanted to use something as a constant to base the speed of everything else on in his theory of relativity he said energy equals mass times the speed of light squared, meaning light is constant. If you were on a train and the train is traveling 50 mph and you threw a baseball 40 mph, that baseball is going to be going 90 mph. Light does not have that property. According to physicists, if you're out in space and there two spaceships flying toward each other and each shoots a beam of light at the other, the light is going to travel at 186,234 miles per second, the same speed it would if they were traveling away from each other. It's an amazing thing property light. If I could shoot a beam of light around the globe, it would circle the earth six times and penetrate my body in one second.

## **B. Intellectually, light refers to God's knowledge**

Have you ever struggled with a difficult problem and all of a sudden you get the knowledge and the insight, like you suddenly "saw the light"? We even use a little light bulb to indicate understanding. The Bible says God is omniscient—he knows everything. God is not in the dark about any truth, about any fact. He knows everything and so there's a brilliance to his knowledge.

## **C. Morally, light refers to God's holiness**

"God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." Morally light refers to God's holiness. There is a in the original Greek of that verse. In English, a double negative is poor grammar. We're not never supposed to use double negatives. But in the Greek language, a double negative intensifies what is being said. So literally it is saying, "In God there is not never any darkness." That's poor grammar but it's great theology.

There is nothing in the nature of God that would even suggest or hint of impurity or sin or filth. If God is holiness and purity, light, the Bible says the devil is the prince of darkness. We know that in the Bible, light represents holiness and righteousness and darkness represents sin and disobedience. There is no darkness in God whatsoever. "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing." (Habakkuk 1:13). "'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.' At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke." (Isaiah 6:3-4). "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17). With God there is no shadow, no darkness. Right now I'm casting six

shadows because of the lights in here, but if suddenly I begin to radiate and emanate light brighter than the lights around me, I wouldn't have a shadow—I would throw light and make shadows. That's what the Bible means in James chapter 1. God is perfect light and there's no darkness about him. God doesn't have a shadow—He is emanating light in his holiness and his purity. So the foundation of our fellowship with God is not based on who we are, it's based on who God is: He is light.

## **II. THE FAILURE IN OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD**

"If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth." This passage of scripture talks about a problem of failure in our fellowship with God. Does God fail us? No. Our fellowship is not dependent upon our character, but the character of God. God never fails in our fellowship; we fail in our fellowship with God. Probably the most important thing I'm going to share with you tonight is this next statement so please don't miss it:

### **A. Our relationship with God cannot be broken but our fellowship with God CAN be broken**

If you don't understand that, you'll spend a lot of your life doubting your salvation and you'll spend a lot of your Christian life missing out on the blessings of God, wondering if you're lost or saved.

Look at the words "relationship" and "fellowship" again. Maybe there's a couple words you can write beside them to give you an idea. Next to the word relationship, write the word "family," because our relationship with God puts us in the family of God. He's our father, we're his children. Beside the word fellowship, write the word "favor," because you can be in the family of God and not be in the favor of God.

I firmly believe that once you are truly born again you can never lose your salvation. I believe the Bible teaches that. Some Christians don't believe that. Wouldn't it be terrible to go through your entire life worrying about losing your salvation? I believe once you're born into the family of God, that can never be broken but you can sure get out of favor with God when the fellowship is disrupted. Let me give you an example. Imagine you're a parent and you have a child born into your family and nothing that child can ever do will change the fact that he is your child—he's in your family. But imagine that child grows up and is a terrible person, a vicious criminal, a reprobate. He disappoints you, disobeys you, changes his name, says, "I don't even want to be your child anymore. I'm changing my name." And he does everything he can to hurt you. Is he still your son? Yes, but is he in your favor? When it comes time to write the will are you going to give him everything? That's a good example. I firmly believe you can be a child of God in his family but if you're out of fellowship with God, you won't be in his favor. The failure in our fellowship is if we walk in darkness; we are lying and we don't live by the truth.

### **1.) The profession**

I want to mention three things about the failure in our fellowship. First is the profession the profession. John says just because we say we have fellowship with God, doesn't mean we are.

You can be terribly backslidden and still say, "I'm in fellowship with God," "I'm walking with God—everything's right between me and God." You can say it but that doesn't necessarily make it so. The Bible is full of the truth that you can say anything but if your walk doesn't match your talk it's just not so I can say anything. I can stand up here and tell you I'm an American Indian, but I'm not an American Indian. You can say anything, even that you're right with God, and John is talking about people who profess that fellowship with God.

## 2.) The practice

Secondly in this failure is the practice, because what we practice is more important than what we profess. John says the failure occurs when you're walking in darkness. We're going to be studying the next passage of scripture about how and what happens when a Christian sins. When a Christian is not taking one step in sin but walking in darkness practicing sin, you're out of fellowship with God. Only you know whether you're doing that or not. If you are already established in the family of God and you are walking in darkness, the fellowship isn't there, no matter what you say.

## 3.) The pretense

That leads us to the third point of this failure. John says something about the pretense. You can pretend all you want, but John has pretty strong words for you. He says, "You're lying," four times in the book of 1 John. He says if you say one thing but act another way it's a lie, lie, lie, lie. With writing like that, John is not going to get Man of the Year. It's tough but true.

Remember when you were a kid and you liked to play make believe and pretend? Kids love to dress up and pretend they're a ballerina, a soldier or a policeman. The sad fact of the matter is there are a lot of adults today who do the same thing every Sunday morning. They dress up, they go to church and they act like a person they don't act like Monday through Saturday. They are grown up, but they're still playing "let's pretend." I hope you already know who you really are is not who you are at 11:00 on Sunday morning. Who you really are is who you are at 7:00 on Monday morning. The Bible says don't play a game, don't fake it—you can be out of fellowship with God. The devil loves to get a Christian who is out of fellowship with God, because a Christian out of fellowship with God won't do anything for God. In fact, he'll be a bad influence on others.

A little boy and girl went to visit their grandparents on the farm. The boy had a slingshot his granddad had made for him. One day he was shooting at the barn but couldn't hit it. He shot at a tree and couldn't hit the tree. He looked over at his grandmother's prize goose, pulled the slingshot back and WHAP! Hit the goose right in the head and killed it on the spot. Terrified, he didn't know what to do, so he did what most little boys would do—he dragged the goose into the woods and covered it up, figuring no one would know. About that time his older sister walked out and said, "I saw what you did!" And he pleaded with her not to tell their grandmother. She said, "We'll see." That night they were at the dinner table and the grandfather said, "Tommy, are you and I going fishing tomorrow?" His sister asked if she could go too. But granddad said, "No, you stay here and help grandma. I'm gonna take your brother fishing." She stared at Tommy and said, "You don't want to go fishing, do you? You're gonna let me go fishing, aren't you?"

Tommy swallowed hard and said, "Yeah I'll let you go fishing." The next day grandfather asked Tommy to ride into town. Tommy's sister said, "You don't really want to go to town in the truck, do you Tommy? You want to let me go, don't you?" He said, "Yeah, I guess so." The next grandfather said, "Tommy, let's go down here and work in the barn together and do something special." Tommy's sister said, "You don't want to do that, do you? You want to let me go instead of you, don't you?" Tommy replied, "Yeah." And he just couldn't stand it, because she had the knowledge of what he'd done hanging over him. Finally, after three days he couldn't stand it any longer and he went to his grandmother and said, "Grandma, I'm so sorry I shot your prize goose with my slingshot. I hid it and I'm so sorry grandmother." She said, "Tommy, I was watching out the kitchen window when you shot that goose with your slingshot. I know you didn't mean to do it and I've forgiven you." He said, "Why didn't you say something sooner?" She said, "I just wanted to see how long you were going to let your sister make a fool out of you."

When you're out of fellowship with God, the Devil has you right where he wants you and he accuses you, he abuses you, and he'll mess up your mind. The whole time, God's forgiven you, and he's already forgiven you and all you have to do is come to him, but until you do, the devil's making a fool out of you.

### **III. THE FORGIVENESS IN OUR FELLOWSHIP**

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another." The Bible says if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from every sin.

#### **A. Walking with other believers**

The forgiveness from God allows us the ability to walk with other believers. Our fellowship with each other is dependent on our fellowship with God and I believe it with all my heart that if you're not right with God you cannot be right with your brother and usually when somebody is not right with another Christian, you can make sure that one of those two believers is not right with God. Only when you walk in the light, fellowshiping with God, can you walk with each other. The most glorious thing about this whole passage is that God desires to have fellowship with you. The Creator of the universe wants to know you intimately, have fellowship with you. Can you imagine how it must have been before Adam and Eve sinned? The Bible says God would come and walk in the cool of the evening with them in the Garden of Eden. I can hardly imagine! I don't know what form God took, but he walked with Adam and Eve and I wonder what Adam said to him? "Lord, how ya doin'?" "Fine." I guess the Lord's always doing fine, Amen? "Adam, is there anything you need?" "Lord, got a little problem over here with some of these apples, will you take care of it?" "Sure I'll take care of it." "Lord got a little problem over here with some of these trees, will you take care of it?" "Sure I'll take care of it. Anything else you need Adam?" "Well, I can't think of anything, Lord. I mean you've been so good. You've provided everything for us." "Well Adam, let's just walk and talk together." Wouldn't that have been wonderful? And when sin entered the human race, he lost that.

Jesus wants to restore to you everything the devil took away in sin and that beautiful song by Charles Austin Miles that says "I've come to the garden alone / While the dew is still on the roses / And the voice I hear falling on my ear / The Son of God discloses / And He walks with me, and He talks with me." It is possible for you to have that kind of fellowship with God.

## **B. Washed in the blood**

"The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." A lot of people today don't like to talk about the blood of Jesus Christ. They think we've become too dignified for that and they want to talk about the blood as something gory, but it is not a gory story, it is a *glory* story!

At the beginning of his ministry, someone said to Billy Graham, "Mr. Graham, God can use you but you must leave off that preaching about the blood of Jesus; that's slaughterhouse religion." Instead, Billy determined in his heart to preach more than ever on the blood of Jesus Christ. It may not be popular today, but there's no other way to get to heaven except the blood bought by way of Jesus Christ. I don't understand it, but the Bible says without the shedding of blood there's no remission of sins. It was not the blood flowing in the veins of Jesus that saves us, it is the blood spilt on Calvary that must be poured out for our sins to be forgiven. I don't begin to understand it, but all I know is it was God's plan and Jesus came and did it.

What can you say about the blood of Jesus? Let me just give you some words that describe the precious blood of Jesus. First, Jesus' blood is precious. "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Second, the blood of Jesus is purchasing. "Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:28)

Third, the blood of Jesus is peace giving. "And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." (Colossians 1:20)

Fourth, the blood of Jesus is purging. "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" (Hebrews 9:14)

Finally, the blood of Jesus is prevailing, because the Bible says in Revelation 12:11, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

The blood of Jesus Christ can forgive your sins; no sin you've ever committed is too dark or too much of a stain that His blood can't forgive you.

## **CONCLUSION**

I love to read the journals of great preachers. I've read *The Autobiography of Charles G. Finney*, the great revival preacher. Charles Finney was preaching one night on the blood of Jesus Christ and how God's Atonement cleanses us from all sin. After the meeting that night, a man asked him to accompany him to his office. Mr. Finney went with him into his office and the man pulled out a revolver. Finney thought, "This is it. I'm gonna be killed." Instead, the man said, "Mr. Finney, this gun has killed four men. Can God forgive that?" Charles Finney said, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us of all our sins." The man said, "But you don't understand. I run a bootleg operation in the bottom of this building. I sell whiskey by the barrel and it has sent many men to an early grave. Can God forgive that sin?" Charles Finney said, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us of all our sins." The man continued, "But you don't understand I live across the street and I've come drunk in the evening many times and beaten my wife and daughter. And one night I disfigured my little because I came in and in a drunken stupor I knocked her down and now she's crippled! Can God forgive that?" Charles Finney said, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us of all our sins."

Charles Finney left. The man got on his knees and prayed all night. Early the next morning he went home. Later that morning his wife asked their daughter to go get her father for breakfast. The girl went upstairs but came back with a puzzled look on her face. She said, "Mother, something is wrong with daddy. He said to me, 'Darling, I'll be right down.' Something's wrong." The woman went to the stairs and called for her husband. He came down and according to what Charles Finney wrote in his journal, the man put his arms around his wife and said, "Honey, you have a new husband." And he took his little girl in his arms and said, "Daughter, you have a new daddy." And when his wife asked what happened, he simply said, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us of all our sins."

## OUTLINE

### I. THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

- A. Physically, light refers to God's glory
- B. Intellectually, light refers to God's knowledge
- C. Morally, light refers to God's holiness

### II. THE FAILURE IN OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

- A. Our relationship with God cannot be broken but our fellowship with God CAN be broken
  - 1.) The profession
  - 2.) The practice
  - 3.) The pretense

### III. THE FORGIVENESS IN OUR FELLOWSHIP

- A. Walking with other believers
- B. Washed in the blood  
Jesus' blood is
  - 1.) Precious (1 Peter 1:18-19)
  - 2.) Purchasing (Acts 20:28)
  - 3.) Peace (Colossians 1:20)
  - 4.) Purging (Hebrews 9:14)
  - 5.) Prevailing (Revelation 12:11)

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes