

Living in the Light of God's Love
1 John

Lesson One—1 John 1

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You are the great “I am.” You have promised greater joy in our lives because we are attached to You as branches to a vine. We are Your sheep, and You are our Shepherd. You are the Bread of life to feed our hungry souls. You are the Light of the world, and we are privileged to walk in that light. Grant that as we read and grow together, we might go home strengthened in our faith and blessed with greater joy in our lives. We ask this in Your name. Amen.

Background

John was probably already quite old when he wrote this letter. It is written after he wrote His Gospel, which is the last of the 4 Gospels, but before he penned the book of Revelation. The Gospel of John was written around 90 AD. His Epistles between 90-95 AD, and the book of Revelation around 95 AD. John wrote this Epistle to help rebuke the teachings of Cerinthus, an Egyptian Jew, who cobbled together teachings from the Old Testament, fragments of Christianity, and pagan philosophy. This teaching became known as Gnosticism, from the Greek word “gnosis,” meaning “knowledge.” Much like the new-agers of today, they stressed the inner knowledge of man as far more important than the revelation of God, the inspired Word. The Bible was an insufficient source of guidance for faith and life.

They believed that matter was evil and only the mind and spirit were pure; therefore the body was not important, so it didn't matter how you lived your life since it was evil already. Today?

They believed the heavenly Christ and the earthly Jesus were two separate beings. They did not believe in the incarnation or virgin birth, nor the atoning sacrifice of Jesus or a bodily resurrection.

The sad result of this teaching that spread throughout Christendom, was that believers were losing their confidence in the Bible, as the word of God, losing their certainty of being saved, drifting into unrepentant sinful lifestyles, growing selfish, hypocritical and unloving in their church and family life and losing their ability to distinguish truth from error.

John's letter is a powerful blast of truth, rebuke, passionate exhortation and an encouragement to love in order to bring people back into a stronger, more vital relationship with the Lord Jesus, their only Savior.

John's style of writing is unique and quite different from Paul and Peter. There are no Old Testament quotations. No names mentioned, except a brief allusion to Cain. No greetings or personal instructions as Paul has. Paul's sentences are long and complex; John's are short and his word use is limited. Paul's line of thought is linear---he takes up a subject, writes on it, and moves on to another. John's approach is more circular---

His Word in My Life

Think of a situation where you might be talking “religion” with a friend at work. Consider directing the conversation to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and the nail prints in His hands. How might such a bold witness to Jesus’ resurrection lead to further witnessing about who Jesus is, what He has done with our sin, and what will happen to us when we die?

We may have low moments and down days. When these days come, we should never lose sight of the big picture. What is the big picture of Christian life according to 1 John 1:1-4?

Think of someone in your life who is not part of this picture. Pray for an opportunity to speak to that person about Jesus’ death and resurrection this week.

Walking in the light

Read 1 John 1:5-7

1. God is light. What do these verses teach us about the holiness and righteousness of God? (See also 2 Corinthians 6:14.)
2. Why is every act of walking in darkness actually a lie for the Christian? (1:6; compare this to John 3:19-21.)
3. Why do Christians who walk in the light of God’s eternal love never grow weary of hearing the last part of verse 7?

His Word in My Life

Martin Luther once said, “A holy and righteous God can no more embrace sinners than fire can embrace straw.” Why is it so dangerous for Christians to expose themselves to walking in the darkness?

“The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from *all* sin.” What would you say to a fellow Christian deeply troubled by a sin?

Agree or disagree: The believer is walking in the light of God’s forgiving grace even when in the act of sinning.

Getting rid of the darkness

Read 1 John 1:8-10

1. Ancient heretics in the early church, the Gnostics, denied the existence of sin in their lives. Discussing sin is not fashionable in some churches today. If we deny the reality of original sin or actual sins, what are we actually doing? (1:8)

2. *Faithfulness* and *justice* are combined in verse 9. How does the picture behind each of those words help you enjoy the Lord's pardon?

3. In what ways does the claim "I have no sin" make God look like a liar in the eyes of other people? (1:10; note the honesty of Paul in Romans 7:18-25.)

His Word in My Life

God is faithful and just. In His justice He must punish all sin completely. How does Jesus' suffering on the cross show us God's justice? In what sense is this law? In what way is it gospel? How does the cross show us God's faithfulness?

Very often the response to "I'm sorry" is "Just forget it" or "It's no big deal." What is the difference between those responses and "I forgive you"?

Summary

In this chapter you have seen your beautiful and glorious Savior. What beautiful things about Him do you want to take home with you and think about during this coming week?
Let us sing hymn: 657

he jumps from one concept to another, linking them together, and then comes back one or more times to the original thought. John's style has been described as a "spiral staircase" in which the reader goes round and round, always upward.

John also likes parallelism and repetition of thought. He prefers stating abstract principles rather than concrete examples. John likes metaphors and uses them as great themes throughout his letter. "Light" and "love" are two prominent words (themes) throughout this little letter. Others are "darkness, truth, fellowship, life, world."

John presents himself as an "elder," a parent or older brother to the believers to whom he wrote. Like someone leading a toddler by the hand, John guides the believer in Christ away from dangerous false teachings so that he/she may "walk in the Light."

Introduction

In the 1980s, movie-actress-turned-author Shirley MacLaine wrote books about finding God within herself. Her New Age thinking was displayed in such books as *Dancing in the Light* and *Out on a Limb*.

The Apostle John wrote this epistle at a time when similar anti-Christian, "new age" thinking was beginning to seep into the church under the banner of *Gnosticism*. Gnostics believed matter was inherently evil. The spirit could "dance in the light" if it rose above matter. They would not accept the Bible's teaching that the Word became flesh in the person of Jesus, the Christ.

You Are Living in the Light of a Glorious Savior

1. Being in the true light (1-4)
2. Walking in the light (5-7)
3. Getting rid of the darkness (8-10)

Being in the true light

Read 1 John 1:1-4

1. What do the words "that which was from the beginning" teach us about Jesus? (1:1); see John 1:1 and Revelation 1:8,17,18.)

2. What were the disciples actually able to do with their hands, eyes, and ears when the risen Lord and Savior appeared to them? (1:1, 2) (Also read Luke 24:39.)

3. It was a daily privilege for John to recall those close moments with Jesus after the resurrection. What does Jesus say about our "faith eyes" and "faith hands" in John 20:29?

4. John gives a reason for boldly speaking of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. What is that reason? (1:3)