

## 1 JOHN 1:5-7

**INTRODUCTION** – Having seen, listened and touched the Lord Jesus, John now begins to proclaim what he has seen and in particular what he has heard from the Lord Jesus Christ. He has heard the message from the Lord Jesus and he is now about to declare it to these churches in Asia Minor. That is the task of the church today. What the apostles heard and saw they proclaimed and they wrote down so that the church of all generations could continue to proclaim the message that the prophets and apostles received from God.

We do not receive any new messages from God, God has said all that he is going to say, he has given his message to the prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New Testament who under the influence of the Holy Spirit wrote those words down for our benefit. As a consequence it is our task to proclaim that same message given to the prophets and Apostles and we need to apply that message to today's generation.

So what was this message that John heard from the Lord Jesus and declared to these churches that he is writing too.

### 1. GOD IS LIGHT (v 5)

Now only John gives us these descriptions that describe God's being. This is what God is like in essence. He tells us that God is Spirit (John 4:24) here he tells us that God is light (1 John 1:5) and then we learn that God is love (1 John 4:8). We have no problem knowing what John means when he talks about God as Spirit and love but it is not so easy to know what he means by light. What is clear is that he does not mean that God is this bright light living up in heaven.

This is picture language in order to get us to understand an aspects or aspects of God's being. So what does John mean by God is light. Well the context has to be our guiding principle here. The statement following the truth that God is light is a commentary on what it means for God to be light it means there is no darkness in him at all. It is speaking here of his holiness, his purity, his perfect moral righteousness.

In the Old Testament the prophet Habakkuk put it like this "your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong" (1:13). Light and darkness are so far apart that you cannot confuse the two or mix the two it is either light or dark, God is light but the bible teaches that we are dark because of sin. Therefore it is only by God coming into this world in the person of Jesus, and living a perfect pure life and dying a cruel death on our behalf that we can come into fellowship with Him. It is only the blood of Jesus that purifies us from all sin. Unless Christ has cleansed us, unless his death has been applied to our lives and has removed our sin then we have no relationship or fellowship with God. No matter what we claim; God is light we are dark; we need to be cleansed from our sin so that we can come into the light of God's presence.

## 2. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS TRUTH

Now John goes on to apply what this means in his situation. It means that if these false teachers were claiming that they had fellowship with God yet their lives were entertaining sin then the conclusion must be drawn that they are liars and do not live by God's truth. But these false teachers probably did not believe that they were walking in darkness or were living lives inconsistent with God's character, they claimed to be in fellowship with God because they claimed God had given them an anointing of the Holy Spirit and a special knowledge that other Christians didn't possess. Therefore they were actually in a more privileged position than most believers.

But what John does is to expose just one area of sin (v 7). If we claim to walk in the light that is in God's presence then we have fellowship with one another. Now that was a problem with the false teachers, they were not having fellowship with the churches that John is writing too. The very natural outcome of having fellowship with God is a desire to have fellowship with other Christians who also have fellowship with God. But the false teachers had broken away from the church, they saw these Christians that John is writing to as ordinary Christians whereas they were extraordinary for they had received special knowledge of God, they had received a special anointing.

What John is saying is that such a refusal to have fellowship with all of God's people is in fact sin, it is an indication that these false teachers are not walking in the light but are in fact walking in darkness. Their sin is the sin of exclusiveness, only those who have this special knowledge have fellowship with God everyone else at best is a second rate Christian.

Now let us try and apply all this to us in our 21<sup>st</sup> century world. The first thing that we must say is that God expects holiness from his people (Leviticus 11:44 & 1 Peter 1:16). Now those statements do not mean that we are to do our best to be holy and if we try hard enough we will reach the standard of holiness. None of us can be holy by ourselves but when we come to have fellowship with God, our sin is removed through the blood of Jesus and we come into a position where we are holy before God.

We are separated from sin and the world and what God declares is that now you are holy, live it out, be holy because I am holy. Believers have something of the character of God living within them; therefore their lives must reflect that. This is also the key for assessing anyone's claim to be a Christian. We cannot see whether they have been regenerated within their hearts all we can do is to look at anyone's life and ask is this person who is claiming to be a Christian reflecting something of God's holy character within their life.

If they are not then they are not Christians. In particular there must be an inner desire to deal with all sin within our lives. There must be hatred of darkness. There must be no sign of toleration of sin. The reason for all this is that God is light and if we claim to have fellowship with this God then our lives will reflect something of what he loves and what he hates.

Is there clear evidence in our lives that we are in fellowship with God? Is there a hatred for sin and love for purity? Are we asking God everyday to make us more like the Lord Jesus to give us his grace to turn away from all wrongdoing and to draw us into his presence through the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus.

Another application is the truth that God wants us to have fellowship with all those who have fellowship with him. There is no exclusiveness with God, if anyone is genuinely in fellowship with God through Christ then they are in fellowship with us and our approach ought to show that. It is totally inconsistent and sinful to think that one can have fellowship with God and not have fellowship with his people.

You cannot have fellowship with God and not have fellowship with His people. People often say, "I am a Christian but I don't go to church." Such a way of thinking is completely foreign to the bible; people who say such things are not Christians. For John tells us clearly that those who have fellowship with God also have fellowship with God's people. You cannot separate God from His people, to have fellowship with God means that you will have fellowship with his people.

It also means that we will have fellowship with **all** God's people even those who do not think as we think. There may be times when we cannot have fellowship with certain churches because they are no longer gospel churches but we can always have fellowship on a personal level with those individuals who may be in such churches. Why? Because they have fellowship with Christ, they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. I think we need to recognise that it is an immense privilege to have fellowship with God and his people. Now there is no doubt in my mind that the church today needs to appreciate more the privilege of having fellowship with other Christians. I say this for there are hundreds of people maybe thousands of people in our churches who starve themselves of fellowship and do so because of trivial excuses.

The "oncens" on Sundays are denying themselves the opportunity of expressing their fellowship with other believers by staying at home. Those who only come on Sundays are failing to understand the joy and privilege of having fellowship with their fellow believers. Most people who do so make the feeblest excuses for their actions when the truth is that they simple have failed to understand what it means to have fellowship with God.

To have fellowship with God is to have fellowship with his people. It is hurtful to God when we fail to express our fellowship with other believers. I don't just mean other believers in our fellowship but in other churches as well. Perhaps some of us are better at expressing fellowship with other Christians who we only see occasionally than with those within our own church that we have to rub shoulders with weekly. It is always harder to express fellowship with Christians that we meet with weekly then it is to express fellowship with other Christians occasionally.

Notice another implication of the fact that God is light (v 7) When we walk with God we have fellowship with Him and we have fellowship with others but what happens when we have fellowship with God and with his people? Our sin is exposed. If God is light and cannot look at darkness within our lives, what can we do? Are we then

robbed of fellowship with God and others? No! Because God has provided a way for us to be cleansed or purified.

The blood of Jesus God's Son purifies us and goes on purifying us from all sin. Christ's death was a once for all sacrifice; his death was sufficient to cleanse us from all sin of all time. The word 'purifies' is a continuous tense it means that as we walk with God who is light we begin to see more and more spots and blemishes in our lives because his light exposes them. What we must do at such times is to repent turn our sin knowing that the blood of Jesus his Son purifies us from all sin.

So we can maintain fellowship with God and with his people because of the work of Jesus on the cross. The death of Jesus is not something relevant to our past life before we became Christians it is relevant today, for it is as a result of Jesus death on the cross that we are cleansed from today's sins. Anyone who is in a relationship with God knows what sin is and how evil it is and how offensive it is to God. We want to be cleansed from it and will be repenting of our daily sins. The consequence of this cleansing that comes through Jesus is that we have fellowship with God and fellowship with his people.

Is your fellowship with God unhindered today? Is there some sin or sins that you know about and have been entertaining for some time now but as a result your fellowship with God and with God's church has been hindered and restricted. Has something or someone come between you and the Lord and his church? If so then stop pretending everything is OK, repent of those sins, flee from them and turn your mind in faith again to the cross.

See Jesus bleeding and dying there for you. Ask him for forgiveness, tell him you have been rebelling against him maybe for years and apply this verse to yourself. If you do that then you can know that the blood of Jesus His son purifies you from all sin.

Let me say a word in closing to anyone who does not know what I am talking about when I mention fellowship with God and His people. What you need is verse 7 applied to your life; you need the cleansing that comes through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. You cannot know fellowship with God because God is light and you are still in darkness, you are still in your sins. You need forgiven; you need to be made clean.

That comes by applying Christ death to yourself personally. It comes when God awakens your dead soul so that you repent and believe in Jesus Christ. When that happens to you then you will be cleansed and brought into a right relationship with God through Jesus and brought into a relationship with God's church.

You need to call out to God confess your sin and seek his forgiveness through Jesus Christ and experience His gracious forgiveness.

Amen