

Living Word Fellowship Church

Pastor Paul Cannings, D. Phil.
Walk Through the Bible
1 John 2:7-11

Be the Light

I. Introduction to the Passage

John has emphasized obedience to the truth because this shows that you know God and that you love Him (2:3-6).

This is one reason why God established the local church, the fellowship of believers. “You can’t be a Christian alone”—a person cannot live a complete and developing Christian life unless he is in fellowship with God’s people. The Christian life has two relationships: the vertical (Godward) and the horizontal (manward). And what God has joined together, man must not put asunder! And each of these two relationships is to be one of love, one for the other.¹

In verses 9 and 10 hatred and love are moral qualities which are not primarily emotions, but attitudes expressed in actions (3:15-16).

He that saith. This is the fifth time John points out a possible inconsistency between profession and conduct (1:6, 8, 10; 2:4; cf. 4:20).²

II. Background Notes

2:9–11. The secessionists who have withdrawn from the Christian community John addresses have broken fellowship with true Christians, thus showing that they “hate” rather than “love” them. The ³Old Testament and Judaism forbade “hatred of brothers and sisters” (Lev 19:17); in a Jewish context, this term referred to fellow Jews (though cf. also 19:34); in a Christian context, it refers to fellow Christians.⁴

Jesus cited popular opinion that honoring God and hating certain people were compatible: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy’ ” (Matt. 5:43). Jesus rejected this, and so does John. But not all religious teachers of the time thought that hatred was necessarily a bad thing. *The Community Rule* of the Qumran community (CD 1. 9–11) teaches that community members are to “love all the sons of light, each one according to his lot in God’s plan, and to detest all the sons of darkness, each one in accordance to his blame in God’s vindication.” This hatred could be seen as a reflection of God’s own loathing of evil; since God abhors the wickedness of the world, his people would be justified in abhorring wicked people

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 489). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (Eds.). (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (1 Jn 2:9). Chicago: Moody Press.

³Old Testament ***Old Testament**. The common modern term for the Hebrew Bible (including Aramaic portions) as defined by the Jewish and Protestant Christian canons; Jewish readers generally call this the Tenach.

⁴Keener, Craig S. ; InterVarsity Press: *The IVP Bible Background Commentary : New Testament*. Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, 1993, S. 1 Jn 2:9

(see “Hating People,” below). In contrast to this John’s teaching focuses on love and leaves judgment in God’s hands.⁵

Darkness:

1. In the ⁶NT “darkness” is used twice in its literal sense. At the crucifixion of Jesus, for a three-hour period from noon to three o’clock, there was no light (Mt 27:45; Mk 15:33; Lk 23:44). The other reference is to Christ’s second coming, when “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light” (Mt 24:29).
2. Most figurative references to darkness appear in poetic material, such as Job, Psalms, and Isaiah. Generally, such darkness depicts ignorance about God’s will. Knowledge of God is “light”; hence lack of such knowledge is “darkness” (Jb 12:24, 25; Mt 4:16; Jn 1:5; 8:12; 12:35, 46; 1 Jn 1:5; 2:8, 9, 11).
3. The apostle John’s emphasis on the conflict between darkness and light depicts the continuing struggle between the evil one (Satan) and Jesus. The light has come and the darkness has not overcome it (Jn 1:5). The world is a realm of darkness into which Jesus has brought light (Jn 3:19; 8:12; 12:46). God himself is light (1 Jn 1:5). True light comes only through Jesus (Jn 1:9). Anyone, therefore, who does not know God remains in darkness, in spiritual ignorance.

Light:

1. The offspring of the divine command (Gen. 1:3). “All the more joyous emotions of the mind, all the pleasing sensations of the frame, all the happy hours of domestic intercourse were habitually described among the Hebrews under imagery derived from light” (1 Kings 11:36; Isa. 58:8; Esther 8:16; Ps. 97:11). Light came also naturally to typify true religion and the felicity it imparts (Ps. 119:105; Isa. 8:20; Matt. 4:16, etc.), and the glorious inheritance of the redeemed (Col. 1:12; Rev. 21:23–25). God is said to dwell in light inaccessible (1 Tim. 6:16). It frequently signifies instruction (Matt. 5:16; John 5:35). In its highest sense it is applied to Christ as the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2; Luke 2:32; John 1:7–9). God is styled “the Father of lights” (James 1:17). It is used of angels (2 Cor. 11:14), and of John the Baptist, who was a “burning and a shining light” (John 5:35), and of all true disciples, who are styled “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).⁷
2. The NT use of ‘light’ is both literal (Matt. 17:2) and symbolic (Matt. 4:16, quoting Isa. 9:2), and against the ⁸OT and Jewish background becomes clearly intelligible. In view of the Christian message, the light imagery understandably centers about Jesus. Paul speaks of ‘the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ’ (2 Cor. 4:4) and refers to the language of the Genesis creation narrative (4:6). Believers can be described as enlightened (Heb. 6:4; 10:32). Moreover, disciples are called ‘the light of the world’ (Matt. 5:14). Ultimately, the basis for such statements is the belief that Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12; cf. 1:4-5, 9), for he is the emissary of God, who is light (1 John 1:5) and who calls people ‘out of darkness into his marvelous light’ (1 Pet. 2:9).⁹D.M.S.¹⁰
3. The message that “God is light” needs to be compared with the declarations elsewhere by John that “God is spirit” (John 4:24) and that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). All three stress that immateriality of God and the

⁵ Arnold, C. E. (2002). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*. (Vol. 4, pp. 189–190). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁶NT New Testament

⁷Easton, M.G.: *Easton's Bible Dictionary*. Oak Harbor, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, c1897

⁸OT Old Testament

⁹D.M.S. Dwight Moody Smith, Ph.D.; Professor of New Testament Interpretation; Divinity School; Duke University; Durham, North Carolina

¹⁰Achtmeier, Paul J. ; Harper & Row, Publishers ; Society of Biblical Literature: *Harper's Bible Dictionary*. 1st ed. San Francisco : Harper & Row, 1985, S. 561

"Goodness" of God-viz., God in his essence. Light emphasizes especially the splendor and glory of God, the truthfulness of God, and his purity.

An Expository Outline of the Passage

A. His Command (vs. 7-8):

1. Old commandment – Loving one another was from the beginning as found in Deuteronomy 6:5. This is repetitive especially in the book of Deuteronomy (8:5-6; 10:12-16).
 - a) The old commandment is the word of God (Hebrews 1:1-4; 4:12)
 - b) This old commandment was reiterated by Christ as essential to obeying the entire Bible (Matthew 22:36-40).
 - c) John constantly repeats they have heard. This means they clearly understood everything that was taught to them with a heart to do what it says.

2. The new commandment – The new commandment taught by Christ is how to love an enemy (Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:9-21), and learning how to forgive those who offended you (Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-35 – Jews felt that 4 times forgiving someone was enough).
 - a) *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”* (1 John 5:2-5; NASU)

3. The truth of God can only be revealed in Christ (1 John 1:5-7; 2:3-6). The Holy Spirit is the Helper of Christ and He alone can illuminate the Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-15).
 - a) This is why the truth is in Christ because it is Christ is the truth (John 14:6) and the Holy Spirit that lives in us, at the point of salvation (Titus 3:4-8), is the truth (John 14:16-17). This is why John says; ‘true in Him and in you.’

B. Don't Walk in Darkness (vs. 9, 11):

1. The one who says; Tell, speak – This relates to a person who actually continuously speaks making this claim.
 - a) He that saith. This is the fifth time John points out a possible inconsistency between profession and conduct (1:6, 8, 10; 2:4; cf. 4:20).¹¹
 - b) The secessionists who have withdrawn from the Christian community John addresses have broken fellowship with true Christians, thus showing that they “hate” rather than “love” them. The¹²Old Testament and Judaism forbade “hatred of brothers and sisters” (Lev 19:17); in a Jewish context,

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¹²Old Testament ***Old Testament**. The common modern term for the Hebrew Bible (including Aramaic portions) as defined by the Jewish and Protestant Christian canons; Jewish readers generally call this the Tenach.

this term referred to fellow Jews (though cf. also 19:34); in a Christian context, it refers to fellow Christians.¹³

- c) In verses 9 and 10 hatred and love are moral qualities which are not primarily emotions, but attitudes expressed in actions (3:15-16).
2. He is in the light – This word fundamental means a light that does not go out (Revelation 21:23; John 1:4,5, 9). In a time (John’s time) when darkness is dark, no electricity, it is a great analogy for John to use.
- a) In its highest sense it is applied to Christ as the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2; Luke 2:32; John 1:7–9). God is styled “the Father of lights” (James 1:17). It is used of angels (2 Cor. 11:14), and of John the Baptist, who was a “burning and a shining light” (John 5:35), and of all true disciples, who are styled “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).¹⁴
5. Yet hates – Hate takes place Biblically when a person continuously has malicious, unjustifiable feelings, including a strong dislike or indifference towards another person so that they spit at the person in their hearts.
- a) A Christian who harbors hatred for a fellow Christian has lost all real sense of direction. Like a man wandering aimlessly in the dark, he faces potentially grave dangers.¹⁵
- b) “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” (1 John 3:15)
6. Yet hates – Hate does not need facts. It is simple, a person establishing in their hearts a continuous strong dislike for what they believe someone is doing that they cannot stand.
7. Yet hates His brother – A person how continuously dislikes his brother is committed to his feelings.
8. Yet hates His brother – The Jewish leaders hated Christ when He did no evil.
9. Brother – Once we are saved, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ whether we like it or not.
10. Darkness – Living in darkness is to purposefully live opposed to God’s Word making this a lifestyle pattern. This can be so definitive that the believer can be viewed as serving evil spirits (1 Timothy 4:1-2; Acts 5:1-11). This is not because of how they grew up or what happened in the past.
- a) The term “darkness” (2:11) is used metaphorically to refer to the spiritual and moral condition of the unbelieving world. Unbelievers love darkness because it covers their evil deeds, but believers have no part in it (cf. John 8:12).¹⁶
- b) Knowledge of God is “light”; hence lack of such knowledge is “darkness” (Jb 12:24, 25; Mt 4:16; Jn 1:5; 8:12; 12:35, 46; 1 Jn 1:5; 2:8, 9, 11).
- c) In other references darkness stands for death, a land of shadows and gloom, the dwelling place of the dead far from the light of day (Job 10:21, 22; 15:23; 17:12, 13; 18:18; Eccl 6:4; 11:8).

¹³Keener, Craig S. ; InterVarsity Press: *The IVP Bible Background Commentary : New Testament*. Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, 1993, S. 1 Jn 2:9

¹⁴Easton, M.G.: *Easton's Bible Dictionary*. Oak Harbor, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, c1897

¹⁵Walvoord, J. F., & Zuck, R. B., Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 890). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁶Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 709). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

14. (Vs. 11) - Hates – Hate takes place Biblically when a person continuously has malicious, unjustifiable feelings, including a strong dislike or indifference towards another person so that they spit at the person in their hearts.
15. (Vs. 11) - Brother – Once we are saved, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ whether we like it or not.
16. (Vs. 11) - Darkness – Living in darkness is to purposefully live opposed to God's Word making this a lifestyle pattern. This can be so definitive that the believer can be viewed as serving evil spirits (1 Timothy 4:1-2; Acts 5:1-11).
17. (Vs. 11) - Walk – To walk is to make continuous behavioral characteristics lifestyle patterns.
18. (Vs. 11) - Walk – When a believer persistently decides to pattern their lives to willfully disobey God they demonstrate a commitment to walk in darkness.
19. (Vs. 11) - Darkness – Living in darkness is to purposefully live opposed to God's Word making this a lifestyle pattern. This can be so definitive that the believer can be viewed as serving evil spirits (1 Timothy 4:1-2; Acts 5:1-11).
20. (Vs. 11) - Does not know where he is going – This person is so in the dark they do not have a complete knowledge of the Word of God and therefore lack a full understanding of what God expects of them. Because this person continuously does not comprehend or understanding where they are going they habitually remain in a lifestyle pattern of disobeying God.
21. (Vs. 11) - Blinded – Because this believer has stretched themselves towards a lifestyle of darkness, they lose the capacity to understand or comprehend what God wants them to do (Ephesians 4:17-23).
22. (Vs. 11) - Eyes – This word means to not be as sharp in a believer's ability to obey God. Their hearts becomes closed to them being single minded in their focus to obey God.
23. (Vs. 11) - Blinded his eyes – Walking in darkness causes a believer to lack understanding on how to resolve issues. 2 Peter 1:9-11
24. (Vs. 11) - Blinded his eyes – Relationships end because the believe lacks understanding.
25. (Vs. 11) - Blinded his eyes - The leaders who crucified Christ walked in darkness. Paul stoning Stephen.

B. Walk in the Light (vs. 10):

1. Love – This word is the word for agape love which stands above a friendship type love phileo.
 - a) Love is not being all musshe--love is poured into our hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).
2. Love – This agape love is purposeful because it represents a willful continuous decision to demonstrate compassion and affection towards someone as the Holy Spirit so directs.
 - a) The writer naturally does not deal with the possibility of intermediate states between love and hatred. In so far as the attitude of any particular man towards his fellow-man is not love, it is hatred. In so far as it is not hatred, it is love. The statements are absolute.
 - b) "To love." John often uses this verb in his Letters. In most occurrences both the agent and the goal are personal, and the reference is to men loving God (1 John 4:10,20 f; 5:2), or to men loving men, namely, their brother(s) (2:10; 3:10,14; 4:20 f), one another (3:11,23; 4:7,11 f, 2 John 5), "the parent" and "the child" (1 John 5:1), "the children of God" (5:2), "the elect lady" (2 John), "Gaius" (3 John). In three occurrences the agent is God, loving man (1 John 4:10 f, 19), and in two a personal goal, though not expressed, can be inferred from the context (3:18; 4:19). Finally, in one passage the goal is non-personal, namely, "the world" (2:15). For problems of rendering this verb see the noun in v. 5.

3. Love – Agape love represents a self-sacrificial love that continuously looks out for what is best for others (Philippians 2:1-6).
4. Love – Agape love is produced only because of a relationship with Christ (Matthew 22:36-40) as directed by the Holy Spirit because love defines God’s nature and can only come from Him (1 John 4:7-10). Just like Jesus is the light, God is love.
5. Brother – Once we are saved we are blood brothers and sisters because of the blood of Jesus Christ (Matthew 12:46-50) and we are of the same Holy Spirit who is poured into us at the point of salvation (Titus 3:4-8).
6. Abides – Despite the troubles or complexity that a relationship may experience anyone who decides to love their brother, based on God’s love, remains steadfast in their obedience to God’s Word. It did not matter how brutal the cross became what mattered most is that Christ remains faithful to do His Father’s will. Even after the thief mocked him and then changed his mind Christ remained focused. Even after the soldiers abused Him Christ still asked God to forgive them.
 - a) Indeed, disobeying the law of love makes a right relationship with God impossible; for abiding in him means living as Jesus lived (vv 4, 6). We know from Ignatius (*Smyrn.* 6.2) that some heretics in the early church, of a predominantly docetic inclination, lacked love (“for love they have no care”); and such people may have been in mind here.¹⁷
7. Light – The corresponding passage to this reference is 1 John 1:5-7. Even in the Old Testament David says the Word becomes `a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Ps. 119:105). Peter says, from his own experience, that if a believer does not practice the Word their character does not change as a result they become blind and short sighted. This is why we are described as sons of light (Luke 16:8).
8. Abides in the light – Remaining steadfast in God’s Word causes the Holy Spirit to empower us.
9. Light – A commitment to a lifestyle of obedience is light that guides a believer’s life. This leads them to lay hold of a common bond creating genuine relationships (1 John 1:5-7).
 - a) The message that "God is light" needs to be compared with the declarations elsewhere by John that "God is spirit" (John 4:24) and that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). All three stress that immateriality of God and the "Goodness" of God-viz., God in his essence. Light emphasizes especially the splendor and glory of God, the truthfulness of God, and his purity.
 - b) Light also accents God's empowering activity. God's light enables man to walk in light (John 8:12; 12:35; Eph. 5:8-14). Light, then, is the presence of God's grace.
11. He is in the light - To be in the light is to consistently practice the truth (1 John 1:6).
12. Cause for stumbling – To stumble means to fall into a trap that is waiting like an ambush for a believer. It’s a picture of Satan waiting to ambush a believer so they fall into a sin. When a believer falls into this trap it ruins them. It can also relate to behavioral patterns of a believer that can lead to them being ruined.
14. Cause for stumbling – To have no cause of stumbling does not mean this person does not sin. 1 John 1:8-9 would contradict that. It means, within the context, that this person makes good decision as they walk in the light, loving other believers so they do not develop behavioral patterns that leads to their ruin (Hebrews 12:1-3 – we do not become entangled).
15. Cause for stumbling – Because this believer decides to have a lifestyle of obedience to God’s Word they do not willfully decide to walk in darkness and as a result they do not fall into traps set by Satan (Ephesians 4:25-32).

¹⁷ Smalley, S. S. (1989). [1, 2, 3 John](#) (Vol. 51, p. 60). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

a) But elsewhere in the New Testament σκάνδαλον means a stumbling—block or snare in *another's* way, not in one's *own* way; and this makes sense here. There is yet a third explanation. Ἐν αὐτῷ may mean “in it,” *i.e.* “in the *light* there is no occasion of stumbling.” This makes a good antithesis to the close of ver. 11, “knoweth not whither he goeth.”¹⁸

16. Cause for stumbling – A person who commits to love eventually has a light all through the tunnel (John 11:9-10; John 16:1; 2 Peter 1:9-11).

¹⁸ Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). [1 John](#) (p. 22). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.