

## WALK IN THE LIGHT, NOT IN DARKNESS

### I. Ephesians 3:16-19

A. First John is vitally important. Often described as a letter, it's more like a five chapter sermon. Unlike Paul or Peter's letters, John doesn't address specific church issues. But John does focus on stark contrasts: light vs darkness; love vs hate; truth vs lies; faith and obedience vs sin and disobedience. More than anything, First John addresses the evidences that someone is a genuine believer. Or not. True regeneration, without transformation, makes the authenticity of the supposed regeneration, suspect. First John is the manual for poser-detection.

B. John is the poster child for his own sermon. He epitomizes his own message. What he was and what he became demonstrate how truly knowing Jesus impacts a person. Chosen while a redneck youth, he becomes a wise and beloved elder. Jesus nicknamed John and brother James as *sons of thunder* as they once wanted Jesus to call down fire on a Samaritan village because they wouldn't let them take a short cut to Jerusalem. After Stephen's stoning, persecution chased the Gospel to Samaria, and John went there--this time not to call down fire in judgment, but to see the fire of the Holy Spirit ignite Samaritan hearts. By the Last Supper, he's resting his head on Jesus' chest in Messianic adoration. He refers to himself in his gospel as *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. He's the only disciple courageous enough to be with Jesus at His crucifixion. Jesus commends His mother to John's care while bleeding on the cross. When John has his heavenly Revelation, he falls facedown in reverence before the ascended Lamb of God and reigning King of kings--this same One with whom he used to eat fish and bread.

C. As I read through our text today, look for the contrasts. Hold John's words up like a mirror. They say you can tell a stick is crooked when you lay a straight stick beside it. The Word of God is a vividly clear mirror and a perfectly straight stick.

D. 1 John 1:1-10 (ESV) begins like John's gospel, with a statement of Incarnation:

1) **V1-3: 1** *That which was from the beginning (eternity past), which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life--(Jesus the Christ!) 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, (Eternal life: quality + quantity; depth & intimacy as well as unending duration!) which was with the Father and was made manifest to us-- 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship (koinonia: deep spiritual communion) with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (The Good News of Jesus Christ isn't about religion, it's about relationship. God the Son, came to earth, not to institute new religious rites and rituals, but to atone for our sins, put us in right standing and right relationship with God, and to adopt us into His Family so we might experience the joyful bliss of pure and unblemished worship & fellowship!)*

2) **V4-5: 4** *And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. 5 This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. (God is holy. He is perfectly righteous. No aspect of His moral character or personhood is corrupt or contemptible. No darkness dwells in Him!)*

3) **V6: 6** *If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (Now there's that poser-detection manual at work! The word, walk, implies the willful practice of sin--sin that put Jesus on the cross in the first place! And walking in darkness implies the sin is not only willful but may also be hidden or concealed or treated as though it wasn't sin at all. But God has determined what sin is. Sin is never hidden from Him! Just ask Adam & Eve! You may try and hide your sin under a pile of fig leaves but God sees through your piles!)*

4) **V7: 7** *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, (Live a life that reflects the light of God's holiness, character, and truth) we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (Point of clarity: Walking in or reflecting God's light doesn't cause Jesus' blood to cleanse us from all sin, but walking in the light implicitly reveals that it has! Remember that great quote from John Piper: "Fruit does not make a tree good. A good tree bears good fruit. It shows that the tree is good." The Apostle John is speaking in like manner.)*

5) **V8-10: Before we read the next three verses, is John saying that true believers never sin? If walking in darkness means willful sinning, what does walking in the light mean? Does it mean never sinning? Let's let John answer our questions: 8** *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9* *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10* *If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (So believers do sin and we better not say we don't! Confession is the remedy.)*

**E. Confession of sin implies several things. It implies conviction. (What I've done or am doing is wrong in God's eyes.) It implies contrition. (I must stop it, and I might need help in gaining victory over it.) It implies repentance. (Changing my mind about it, turning away from it, and turning to God.) Merely admitting to sin is not the same as confessing sin. e.g. A man comes home one night and tells his wife he's been cheating on her. Her suspicions are now confirmed. When she tearfully asks her husband 'why?', he says he and his coworker have discovered they have affections for one another, even though he says he still loves his wife. He says he doesn't see anything wrong with loving two women. Then he tells his wife he plans to remain at home but continue the affair. (Though the sin's been made visible, that surely isn't walking in the light. His admittance is not confession of sin--it comes without conviction, contrition, or repentance. He plans to willfully continue sinning.)**

**F. Also: Denying sin, that is obviously sin, represents pride in its ugliest form. We rationalize: 'I don't see anything wrong with stealing from my job--besides I deserve more than what I'm paid!' 'So what if I'm addicted to porn--it's a victimless crime!' 'So what if I cheat on my tax return--the IRS already takes too much!' 'At least half of the things I gossip about are true!' 'Because I deserve true happiness, who cares what I have to do to get it!' What does repentance from those sins look like? What does repentance from your sins look like?!**

**G. At the beginning of this message I said, "True regeneration, without transformation, makes the authenticity of the supposed regeneration, suspect." James MacDonald said, "If my faith hasn't changed me, it hasn't saved me."**

**H. In Colossians 1:9-14 (NLT) Paul writes about how he's been praying for these brothers & sisters and reminds them they've been transferred from one kingdom to another: 9 So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of His will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. 10 Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. 11 We also pray that you will be strengthened with all His glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, 12 always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to His people, who live in the light. 13 For He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, 14 who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.**

**I. The purchase of your freedom, your redemption and adoption, was not cheap. While it cost you nothing, the price paid was the violent death of God's only Son. By setting you free and making you His, you've been blessed with a priceless inheritance--an inheritance you did not deserve nor one you could ever earn. In transferring you from one kingdom to another, one where the King is also your Father, the privileges are immense. And so are the responsibilities. You've become a steward of our Father's reputation. So how are the children of the Most High God to carry themselves? Do your old dark kingdom cronies recognize you're no longer a part of their realm? Or do they see no noticeable difference?**

**J. To a lesser degree, but still an important one, we've been made stewards of our church family's reputation. The truth is, we are also stewards of each other's reputations. What we say or do and how we walk with one another reflects upon one another. If I walk disgracefully, I will disgrace my heavenly Father. And I will also, by default, bring disgrace upon you. Each of us are stewards of this church's reputation and everyone who identifies with her.**

**K. Ephesians 5:8-14 (AMP) illuminates are path home: 8 For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of Light [live as those who are native-born to the Light] 9 (for the fruit [the effect, the result] of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 trying to learn [by experience] what is pleasing to the Lord [and letting your lifestyles be examples of what is most acceptable to Him--your behavior expressing gratitude to God for your salvation]. 11 Do not participate in the worthless and unproductive deeds of darkness, but instead expose them [by exemplifying personal integrity, moral courage, and godly character]; 12 for it is disgraceful even to mention the things that such people practice in secret. 13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light [of God's precepts], for it is light that makes everything visible. 14 For this reason He says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine [as dawn] upon you and give you light."**

**\* So if we've been doused in such Light as this, how should that be reflected in our respective walks? The word, resplendently, comes to mind...**

**\* Close with Prayer...**

## Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

### 1 John 1:1-10 (ESV)

**1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life-- **2** the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us-- **3** that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. **4** And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. **5** This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** 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 cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

### Colossians 1:9-14 (NLT)

**9** So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of His will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. **10** Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. **11** We also pray that you will be strengthened with all His glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, **12** always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to His people, who live in the light. **13** For He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, **14** who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

### Ephesians 5:8-14 (AMP)

**8** For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of Light [live as those who are native-born to the Light] **9** (for the fruit [the effect, the result] of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), **10** trying to learn [by experience] what is pleasing to the Lord [and letting your lifestyles be examples of what is most acceptable to Him--your behavior expressing gratitude to God for your salvation]. **11** Do not participate in the worthless and unproductive deeds of darkness, but instead expose them [by exemplifying personal integrity, moral courage, and godly character]; **12** for it is disgraceful even to mention the things that such people practice in secret. **13** But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light [of God's precepts], for it is light that makes everything visible. **14** For this reason He says, "*Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine [as dawn] upon you and give you light.*"

## Film Clips & Other Links

Test Yourself-Are You In Jesus? By John Piper  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= DJ5AJfx3so](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJ5AJfx3so)

Millersport Covenant Church Sermon Podcasts (MP3s on iTunes)  
<http://millersportcc.com/feed/podcast>

## Bonus Stuff

### John 1:1-14 (ESV)

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. **6** There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness, to bear witness about the Light, that all might believe through Him. **8** He was not the Light, but came to bear witness about the Light. **9** The true Light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. **11** He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. **12** But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, **13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. **14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

### Ephesians 5:1-21 (AMP)

**1** Therefore become imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father]; **2** and walk continually in love [that is, value one another--practice empathy and compassion, unselfishly seeking the

best for others], just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God [slain for you, so that it became] a sweet fragrance. **3** But sexual immorality and all [moral] impurity [indecent, offensive behavior] or greed must not even be hinted at among you, as is proper among saints [for as believers our way of life, whether in public or in private, reflects the validity of our faith]. **4** Let there be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse [obscene or vulgar] joking, because such things are not appropriate [for believers]; but instead speak of your thankfulness [to God]. **5** For be sure of this: no immoral, impure, or greedy person--for that one is [in effect] an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God [for such a person places a higher value on something other than God]. **6** Let no one deceive you with empty arguments [that encourage you to sin], for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience [those who habitually sin]. **7** So do not participate or even associate with them [in the rebelliousness of sin]. **8** For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of Light [live as those who are native-born to the Light] **9** (for the fruit [the effect, the result] of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), **10** trying to learn [by experience] what is pleasing to the Lord [and letting your lifestyles be examples of what is most acceptable to Him--your behavior expressing gratitude to God for your salvation]. **11** Do not participate in the worthless and unproductive deeds of darkness, but instead expose them [by exemplifying personal integrity, moral courage, and godly character]; **12** for it is disgraceful even to mention the things that such people practice in secret. **13** But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light [of God's precepts], for it is light that makes everything visible. **14** For this reason He says, "*Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine [as dawn] upon you and give you light.*" **15** Therefore see that you walk carefully [living life with honor, purpose, and courage; shunning those who tolerate and enable evil], not as the unwise, but as wise [sensible, intelligent, discerning people], **16** making the very most of your time [on earth, recognizing and taking advantage of each opportunity and using it with wisdom and diligence], because the days are [filled with] evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish and thoughtless, but understand and firmly grasp what the will of the Lord is. **18** Do not get drunk with wine, for that is wickedness (corruption, stupidity), but be filled with the [Holy] Spirit and constantly guided by Him. **19** Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, [offering praise by] singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; **20** always giving thanks to God the Father for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; **21** being subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

### **Genuine Regeneration Must Bring Results in Life**

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In an earlier section we saw a beautiful example of the first result of regeneration in a person's life, when Paul spoke the gospel message to Lydia and "the Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul" (Acts 16:14; cf. John 6:44, 65; 1 Peter 1:3). Similarly, John says, "*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*" (1 John 5:1 NIV). But there are also other results of regeneration, many of which are specified in John's first epistle. For example, John says, "*No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God*" (1 John 3:9 NIV). Here John explains that a person who is born again has that spiritual "seed" (that life-generating and growing power) within him, and that this keeps the person living a life free of continual sin. This does not of course mean that the person will have a perfect life, but only that the pattern of life will not be one of continuing indulgence in sin. When people are asked to characterize a regenerated person's life, the adjective that comes to mind should not be "*sinner*," but rather something like "*obedient to Christ*" or "*obedient to Scripture*." We should notice that John says this is true of everyone who is truly born again: "*No one who is born of God will continue to sin.*" Another way of looking at this is to say that "*every one who does what is right has been born of him*" (1 John 2:29).

A genuine, Christlike love will be one specific result in life: "*Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God*" (1 John 4:7 NIV). Another effect of the new birth is *overcoming the world*: "*And His commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God has overcome the world*" (1 John 5:3-4 NIV). Here John explains that regeneration gives the ability to overcome the pressures and temptations of the world that would otherwise keep us from obeying God's commandments and following his paths. John says that we will overcome these pressures and therefore it will not be "burdensome" to obey God's commands but, he implies, it will rather be joyful. He goes on to explain that the process through which we gain victory over the world is continuing in faith: "*This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith*" (1 John 5:4 NIV).

Finally, John notes that another result of regeneration is *protection from Satan* himself: "*We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God [that is, Jesus] keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him*" (1 John 5:18 NIV). Though there may be attacks from Satan, John reassures his readers that "*the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world*" (1 John 4:4 NIV), and this greater power of the Holy Spirit within us keeps us safe from ultimate spiritual harm by the evil one.

We should realize that John emphasizes these as *necessary* results in the lives of those who are born again. If there is genuine regeneration in a person's life, he or she *will* believe that Jesus is the Christ, and *will* refrain from a life pattern of continual sin, and *will* love his brother, and *will* overcome the temptations of the world, and *will* be kept safe from ultimate harm by the evil one. These passages show that it is impossible for a person to be regenerated and not become truly converted.

Other results of regeneration are listed by Paul where he speaks of the "*fruit of the Spirit*," that is, the result in life that is produced by the power of the Holy Spirit working within every believer: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*" (Gal. 5:22–23). If there is true regeneration then these elements of the fruit of the Spirit will be more and more evident in that person's life. But by contrast, those who are unbelievers, including those who are pretending to be believers but are not, will clearly lack of these character traits in their lives. Jesus told his disciples:

*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits.* (Matt. 7:15–20)

Neither Jesus nor Paul nor John point to activity in the church or miracles as evidence of regeneration. They rather point to character traits in life. In fact, immediately after the verses quoted above Jesus warns that on the day of judgment many will say to him, "*Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?*" But he will declare to them, "*I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers*" (Matt. 7:22–23). Prophecy, exorcism, and many miracles and mighty works in Jesus' name (to say nothing of other kinds of intensive church activity in the strength of the flesh over perhaps decades of a person's life) do not provide convincing evidence that a person is truly born again. Apparently all these can be produced in the natural man or woman's own strength, or even with the help of the evil one. But genuine love for God and his people, heartfelt obedience to his commands, and the Christlike character traits that Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit, demonstrated consistently over a period of time in a person's life, simply *cannot* be produced by Satan or by the natural man or woman working in his or her own strength. These can only come about by the Spirit of God working within and giving us new life.

- Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, "*Regeneration: What Does It Mean To Be Born Again?*" - Section D. "*Genuine Regeneration Must Bring Results in Life*" p.p. 704-706. To read the full article, go to:  
[https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/regeneration\\_grudem.html](https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/regeneration_grudem.html)