

IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT

1 John 1:1-10 (Key Verse 1:7)

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, purifies us from all sin.

Walking in the light Is really a question of whether we are saved or not. And so there are those who are unsure whether they are saved or not. There are also those who believe they are saved. There are those who are not saved who think they are saved. Either way, the pressing questions are, how do we know that we know Jesus? How do we know that we are saved, a child of God. That we are living in the light. What does it mean to be saved or a child of God, in light of the title of this message. How do we know we are walking in the light? The book of first John addresses these questions. He also begins by revealing what is the true gospel, the word of life. An he goes on to reveal what it means to live in the light. May God bless us to receive at least one word of God today, Amen!

Part I: We proclaim to you the word of life

In the late century 1st AD arose among Jewish and early Christian sects Gnosticism. It is derived from the Greek word *gnōstikós*, which means, “having knowledge”. It emphasizes more on personal spiritual knowledge than established traditions and faith. Consequently, Gnostics considered material existence flawed or evil, and held the principal element of salvation to be direct knowledge of the hidden divinity, attained via mystical or esoteric insight. Many Gnostic texts deal not in concepts of sin and repentance, but with illusion and enlightenment. To the point that, they did not regard Jesus had come in a physical body, but rather Jesus was simply a spiritual being. This then would present a gospel that is different from the biblical gospel of Jesus Christ. How do you even talk about the resurrection of body of Jesus? His blood that purifies us from all sin and so on. This is why John begins this letter by emphasizing what our faith should be based, the person of Jesus Christ the word of life.

Look at verse 1-2, “1That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.” As compared to Gnosticism, which also proclaims its own version of the word of life, John categorically emphasizes what our Christian faith is based on. Firstly, It is based on the word of God, who was in the beginning. Though creation may have a beginning God does not have a beginning nor an end. Because anything that has a beginning will have an end. That is why food items will show date of manufacture and expiry date. Some last longer however, they have an end irrespective. Secondly, the life appeared, is the eternal life and was with the Father. John emphasizes that they have heard and seen with their own eyes the word of life. This Jesus is what they proclaim who is eternal life and was with the Father from the beginning. Jesus was made manifest in flesh, they could touch him and eat with him. No spiritual entity need physical food for survival. Jesus was a human being like any other person only that he did not have sin, because he was born of a virgin. This is the word of life John proclaimed, the one and only true word of life.

Verse 3 tells us that, John proclaimed this so that genuine believers may have fellowship with them. Rather than being tossed to and from due to some fancy secret high knowledge proclaimed by the Gnostics. Verse 3b says, “...And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” In other words to believe in any other knowledge of God for salvation, for a good life, a better future and so on. If that knowledge or claimed truth does not align or agree with what the bible teaches on the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then those people are lost and are not in fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ. They are living in an illusion, they may be going to Church on Sundays, praying daily (either once, three times, five times, etc) and dedicated people. It does not mean they are nasty people or murderers, however fundamentally they are lost, they are not walking in the light, they are in the dark and do not have the true living God within them. Some people can find themselves eager to hear of some knowledge that would give them peace of mind or something to resolve certain life issues. If we are driven to depend on either a spiritualist (Sangoma) or a pastor (an acclaimed “anointed man of God”), for some illuminating knowledge, given by some spirit. We could be living in an illusion of reality and are vulnerable to deception and lies. John is telling us here that, all we need for life, is the word of God revealed in the Bible. It is enough, it lacks nothing. To have a sense of need for something else for salvation and life, is a sign of imprisonment to a life of sin and darkness.

Growing up, I used to hear my mother say, God helps those who help themselves. We would go to church and pray while my parents would still depend on other things (Spiritualist, Dingaka tsa setswana) when there were issues in our family. However, later on am realizing that, how can a person help themselves when we are prisoners of sin. We can never help ourselves out of sin, no matter what knowledge we acquire or some divine practice we have to do. Many times we may follow God the way we want, according to our feelings and pick and choose what to believe from the bible. Problem within us and within the church is

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that we all think we are walking in the light. We all think God lives within us, either because we do this and that? Some live with constant doubt whether they are saved or not. The worst person is the one who thinks and believes they are saved whereas they are not. Such people are like the Pharisees who saw Jesus, heard the message yet still refused to repent. Anyhow the big question for us today is, how then can we know that we are walking in the light? How can we know for sure that God lives within us? That we are indeed saved.

Part II: Walking in the light

John begins by declaring the message they have heard from Jesus. Look at verse 5, “5This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” God is light, in Him there is no darkness at all. It is either light or darkness. Here we can see that, there is no being in between, there is no option of one leg in and the other leg out. It is either we are in the dark or we are in the light, because God is light and in him there is no darkness. Light and darkness can never co-exist. Light drives out darkness. Look at verse 6 “6If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.” Here we see the first sign that can help us know whether we know Him or whether we indeed have God within us. We can never walk in the dark yet have God within us. This does not mean we do not commit sin, as we shall see later on. However, it does mean that we cannot live in habitual sin, enjoying the sin, never feeling remorseful before God, that we are living in sin. Such a person may claim they are living in the light however, the bible says, you are lying and you do not live out the truth.

The problem of course with Christianity today is that, we compare ourselves to other Christians instead of comparing ourselves with Jesus. Worse part we even compare ourselves with the word and unbelievers. If other Christians live by simply following their heart desires we also follow suit and believe it’s the right way to follow Jesus. Some their job and careers is their god. They will do anything in this world to please their bosses or do anything to start own company (even to compromise what they believe). If they see other Christians dating and involved in sexual immorality they also think that’s alright, as long as they are not killing anybody. They are always eager for their hearts desires to be fulfilled, even though the bible warns about our hearts in Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? Never seeking the will of God or even praying that God may turn our hearts to desire to do His will, rather than our own will and desires. It is actually not easy to obey and live for the will of God. Based on human strength alone it is impossible. For example even Jesus Christ who knew fully well what the will of God was, for him to die on the cross. We still find Jesus praying a very hard prayer, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” It is not by mistake that the bible says the righteous shall live by faith. As a people, we are born with sin in fact we are born as prisoners of sin. Our human nature is that of sin. This also means that all those good things we believe we do and desire are filthy rags before God, because fundamentally are coming a sinful nature. How then can we be freed from being prisoners of sin? How can we be children of the light, having God live within us?

Let us all read verse 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, purifies us from all sin.” Firstly, this means that a walk in the light is possible. To walk also illustrates that a Christian life is lived, it can be physically seen just like we can see if a fruit is ripe or not. To walk in the light means to live each and every day in conformity with the precepts of God. To walk in a generally obedient life, without harboring known sin or resisting the conviction of the Holy Spirit on a particular point. It is to walk in the light just as God is in the light. Secondly, walking in fellowship with one another means, God with us, and we with Him. Does this therefore mean we are walking in perfect obedience and are without sin?

Look at verse 8-9, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” To walk in the light is to recognize that we are sinners. However, to claim that we are without sin is to live with a self righteous heart. Like one of the parable Jesus gave between tax collector and a Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14, from verse 11 to 12 we read “*11The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ 13*” But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’” The tax collector stood a distance and could not even look up to heaven. He acknowledged that he was a sinner. For Jesus said of the tax collector, “*I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God.*” I was actually shocked this year to realize through bible study that, no Pharisee was chosen by Jesus to be among the 12 disciples he had chosen. It was not because to be a disciple you had to be sinless, however all those who accepted the call of Jesus, were heart broken and confessed they were sinners before God. Non of the Pharisee could do that as we see from the parable of Jesus between tax collector and the Pharisee. The Pharisee even compares himself with the tax collector, whereas unlike the Pharisee the tax collector is focused on who God is, such that he could not even look up to heaven. If we confess our

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sin like this tax collector, focusing on who God is, as revealed in the Bible. Jesus is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins. Jesus will purify us from all unrighteousness.

Our salvation rest on no one else but our lord Jesus Christ. Jesus who is same time the word of God, became flesh lived among us. John says, they touched him, saw him with their own eyes. It is this Jesus who also went to the cross and laid down his life so that through his blood, you and me can have our sins forgiven. He was and is faithful, he died on the cross for our sins and rose again on the third day for our justification. The bible says the wages of sin is death. This means that sin leads to death and to be prisoner of sin is to be prisoner of darkness. That is why you can not resist things of the darkness. However, Jesus our good Lord has come, our sin was imputed on him, and so he died for our sake, so we may not have to die due to sin. If we confess our sins the blood of Jesus will purify us from all sin. It does not matter how big and deep we think our sins are, no sin is bigger than the blood of Jesus. Like these adverts on OMO or Jik, that no stain can withstand its power. However unlike OMO or Jik where it still needs human effort, Jesus does all the work, he is faithful and will purify us from all sin. However, if we claim we are without sin, we make God to be a liar and his word is definitely not within us [10]. It is my prayer that, we may live genuine Christian lives, that we may indeed walk in the light just as Jesus is in the light. May we confess our sins to God and to one another so we may bring to light sin that may be living within us. And our Lord Jesus who is faithful, will purify us from all sin. This is God's promise to all those who live in the light as he is in the light. Amen!

I still remember back in the days when I first heard of the gospel. It was actually through my uncle who lives in Mafikeng. I used to see him pray and I think one day he shared the gospel with me. I remember he even once visited our home in Mothibstad and I asked him the question. How can I be saved? I cannot remember well exactly what he said, however I do remember it was centered on believing in Jesus. He then prayed over me and said If I believe in Jesus as my lord, I am saved. However, since then I still lived with doubt on whether I was really saved. I remember whenever I would visit a church and there was an altar call for those who desired to receive Jesus in their hearts be saved, I would feel the heat in my heart to go. I don't remember how many altar calls I have gone to. Then one day some people were starting a Full Gospel church and visited our home to share the gospel. They also happen to have forgotten their bible, and since I had been hearing a lot about the Bible I began to read it. There more I read the more I loved what I was reading. I even came across Romans 10:9, "because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved:..." I then confessed and prayed and from that day on I believe had some bit of assurance of being saved. However, there was one thing that bothered me, I could not understand why Jesus died for me, why he died for my sins on the cross. This bothered me greatly because I was always viewed as a good boy by my parents. I was orderly behaved and at this point in my life, I was also active at my high school's Christian club. I would deliver sermons on certain Fridays as was one of the activities of the club. I would debate issues surrounding the bible with others and most times win the debate. However still I struggled to understand why I was sinner. Which means that I could not actually confess my sin before Jesus. Even my debates were about self, about winning rather than about saving others from a life of sin through pressing Jesus our savior. Through preparing this message, I am now realizing that I was actually still in the darkness. It did not matter my bible knowledge because I was still in bondage with sin. I regarded myself to be without sin and God's word could not have possible lived in my heart, impossible. I even remember when I met Msn Jacob and Shds rebekha, I remember how they tried to help me see am sinner before God. And I would always insist that, I prayed based on Romans 10:9.

I did not find myself commit the serious sins, such as sexual immorality, killing, being drunk and so. However it was when later on, when I got a girlfriend and later fell into sexual immorality that for the first time, I was greatly hit in my heart by a sharp spear. I could not even look up to heaven, I stopped even debating with others about the bible. Because for the first time in my life I actually realized am sinner before God. I saw my love of winning debates over the love of God to save a sole. I was the chief wretched sinner of them all. Having a look of a believer but deep down was a slave for sin. Having good intentions for others, however deep down lived in darkness. I am thankful to Jesus who proved faithful and purified me of all sin so that I may walk in the light. I am now standing before you in fellowship with you and God because of what Jesus did for me on the cross and what he is continuing to do through the Holy Spirit in my life. Amen!

In conclusion, we learn that there are false gospels out there. Gospels that are man centered and based on illusions and lies. Today John revealed what is the true gospel, that the true gospel is centered on the person of Jesus Christ. Who was in the beginning with the father, became flesh and lived among us. Through this passage we can know to some degree whether we are living in the light. And it is surely not a life of comparing ourselves to others or measuring ourselves against our heart desires. We can know we are in living in the light if we confess our sin, trusting in the faithfulness of Jesus who can purify us from sin. However, to claim that we are without sin to make God to be a liar and as such God's is not in us. It is my prayer that, we may be children of the light by living by faith in Jesus and his complete work of salvation. Amen!