

Prayer

We give You praise and glory Lord Jesus Christ. By Your presence with us in the Spirit, You know and understand the difficult things we face. You can see the wider picture of our responsibilities and the consequences of our actions, so may we learn to trust You, to receive Your discernment and wisdom, and therefore do what is right. Guide us daily by Your Spirit, and help us grow in the things of God, we pray, AMEN.

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Fire Services

Pray for all who seek to improve the fire services through studying fire and its effects, and understanding how things burn. May good quality research help to save lives

On-going prayers

- *Lift up to God in prayer the plight of those affected by drought*
- *Give thanks for God's protection for you and your family*
- *Pray for President Obama as he deals with issues in the Middle East*

Meditation

When we, quite rightly, enjoy the benefits of our life and faith,
Lord God, give us hearts which reach out to the deprived.

When we are carried along by the joy of the life You have given us,
May we remember those who are trapped in trouble or strife.

When we are full of happiness in the presence of those we love,
Fill us with compassion for the unloved of this world.

When we are content with our life and grateful for what we have,
Open our hearts and our pockets to the poor around us.

When we are delighted by the beauty of the world in which we live,
Give us a heart for all who suffer its dangerous extremes.

When we are challenged by our Lord to show love and compassion,
May we not be found wanting in discipleship and faith.

When we live the life of faith, may we do the work of the Kingdom!

Bible Study - 1 John 1:5-10

⁵ *This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light and there is no darkness in Him of any kind.*

⁶ *If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we live a 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 that 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*

cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we accuse Him of being a liar, and His Word is not in us.

Review

There is something utterly straightforward about John's message, and yet also extraordinarily complex. Having begun with a message of love and unity in Christ, John now speaks directly about faith as 'black and white', or, darkness and light'. Moreover, John does not speak about faith as if it can ever be private. In his world, all faith is shared faith, and this is why the letter of John is written in the plural, and the most frequent word in the letter is 'we'! The other word that appears throughout 1 John is the word 'fellowship' (twice in this passage), standing for God's gathered people and meaning the same as Paul's word for the same; the 'church'. All of this is essential to John's message, and what he says about Christian 'fellowship' and the meaning of 'sin'. It is important that we study these words carefully, because they have a great deal to say to us now.

John sets out his stall at the beginning of the passage, by declaring 'God is light, and there is no darkness in Him of any kind' (1:5). The obvious consequence of this bold statement must be to ask a number of further questions, 'How can we take part in that light?' 'What then is darkness?' and verses 6 to 8 provide us with John's reply to these and other questions. Behind all John says is his utter certainty that Jesus is light and shows us the light of God. Indeed, He is the one who connects sinful human beings with this light of God; 'the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin' (1:7). This sentence demonstrates complete conviction on John's part; he does not argue this point or explain it, as Paul, in his letters, seeks to argue the logic of his faith. John simply tells us what he believes, demonstrating the attitude of one who was indeed a witness to the life of Jesus. From his point of view, faith was fact, and he had nothing to prove to himself. He was only interested in presenting this faith to the world and helping his 'fellowships' to be united in this faith.

The subject of sin creeps in to what John says early on. The sentence, 'if we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we live a lie ...' (1:6) assumes that the opposite of the light of God is the darkness of human sin. We know no more of what John thinks about sin until verse 8; but at this point, the word 'darkness' serves his purpose. This is to say that whatever the fallen nature of the world in which we live, and the consequences of this for everyone, John believed that it was possible for a saved soul to 'walk in the light', and have no part in the works of darkness. Now, it sounds as if John suggests that we can live a perfect life, but this is a misunderstanding. I am confident (given the rest of John's letter) that he believed it was possible for us to live in this world and 'walk' within it with pure intent, and with God who is perfect light, at our side. So, if we walk with pure intent with our Lord (1:7) and also with each other, then 'the blood of Christ' will deal with the sin that comes our way because of the tainted world in which we live.

What I have just said is now confirmed by what John says next, which is, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ...'. In other words, to walk in the light is not to make any claim to be sinless, only to have confidence in Christ to deal with our sins when they come to our attention. Of course, the only way to do this and maintain our fellowship 'in the light' is to confess sins immediately (1:9). It is surely right that we are constantly challenged to deal with our sins; sometimes we recognise them and sometimes not, but surely, the heart is only 'in the light' if it is actively seeking to learn what sin is and eliminate it! John hammers the message home with his last comment; 'if we say we have not sinned, we accuse Him of being a liar'. Yes, he says that people call God a liar when they say they do not sin! This is a warning for each of us to get 'real' with God.

This whole passage challenges us deeply. Of course, God's people should want to live 'in the light'; it would seem rather strange if they did not, for why have just a little light? Surely, to want only partial light is the most selfish thing imaginable, because the one who wants this wants to hide some things from God's piercing light. The only pathway for Christian faith is to submit wholly to the Lord and ask Him to eliminate all sin from us. It may be a constant process, but it is the only way!

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. What does it mean to you to 'walk in the light'? What does 'walk in darkness' mean to you as well?
2. Is fellowship necessary if we are to 'walk in the light'? In what ways do people attempt to 'walk in the light' without fellowship?
3. If we are not conscious of doing any sin, does that mean to say we are sinless? How can we find out what sin is?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

Many people find this passage to be completely contradictory. They suggest that on the one hand, John asks us to walk in the light in which there is no darkness, and on the other hand, he says that anyone who says they do not sin is a liar! How can the two both be true in any one person? The difference is this, that we who are sinful depend on Jesus being with us to walk in the light, and we are made clean only by His presence. This is what lies at the heart of verse 7, and holds the whole piece together.

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *Dealing with sin can be difficult, and the most difficult part is to recognise one's sin in the first place. We would like this to be a private matter of course, but it rarely is. In fact, we can be greatly helped if we share our inner feelings about sin etc, with others.*
- *Pray for those who are attempting to deal with very difficult personal issues, and find that they are unable to do so. Pray for the life of your church, that it may be a help to those who need to deal with sin.*

Final Prayer

You have given each of us a home, our families, our places of work and our places of worship. May we honour You by respecting these gifts and by fulfilling Your command to 'love one another' within each setting. Hear this prayer, Lord Jesus, and establish Your Kingdom in our midst. AMEN