

The Rock: 09-20-2020

Series: Abiding love

First reading: Psalm 51:10-17

Title: In the light

Scripture: 1 John 1:5-10

Theme:

Joy is found when we live in the light of who Jesus is, and in what He has done for us. The recognition that we are in need of God's light every day, is step one in our spiritual growth.

Introduction:

Chuck Swindoll, in his little commentary, little only in size, makes this comment regarding these verses:

"Let me give you a statement I don't want you to ever forget: *Intimacy is rooted in honesty*. Because it's never too late to do what's right, acknowledging wrong is the first step toward a recovery of intimacy with God and communion with fellow believers."

-Swindoll's Living Insights: Pg. 35

I think that says so much. John also, has so much to say in his letter in such

short little bursts -And, at the end of all things for him, he doesn't seem to waste words.

There is no political correctness for him. He has walked in the light for too long, and he has faced dark forces both within as well as from outside of himself too many times to be delicate about how to address them.

Most especially when it comes to the notion and the truth of sin.

I have always hoped that the older I get, the easier my walk with the Lord would get. Afterall, maturity (I hope), a better understanding of the Bible, and wisdom gained along the way would help.

And wisdom does help, in every sense. I just have discovered though, that it actually becomes increasingly more difficult as I age, not easier. Wisdom allows me to recognize that and admit it.

I have become more self-aware. The more I walk "in the light" of Christ, the more of myself I see, and the more that happens, the more I realize: "I am not all that."

I used to struggle with the notion that the more I prayed for God to conform me to Jesus, it seemed the worse I got. Until I realized that when you get closer

to the light, your imperfections are more glaring.

Afterall -isn't that what light is supposed to do? You can tell everyone you know that hidden in the darkness of your garage is a '68 Mustang Shelby fastback with three on the floor.

Until you flick the light on and they discover all you really have is a '72 yellow Pinto wagon with a half-banger.

Everything eventually comes to the light, and how we deal with it when it does, determines our character, our relationships with one another, and our relationship with God in heaven.

The Story:

"In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem."

-2 Samuel 11:1 ESV

Why second Samuel? I thought we were studying 1 John. Well, we are. But one of the things that John the Apostle is showing us in this letter, is who God is. So, 2 Samuel will make sense soon enough.

John does so, because of what he has seen throughout his long life of suffering and contending for the cause of Christ.

And one of those "refrigerator verses" as we like to call them, is in this little section, and we don't want to take it out of context and apply it in such a way that tells us we can do whatever we want because God is love and he will forgive everything.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

-1 John 1:9 ESV

This verse got me to thinking in my studies: "What does that really mean?" "What does it actually look like?" If we even believe in sin, after all. "So long as I'm not hurting anyone, how can anything be sin, right?"

And then I thought about that "confess" piece. Actually, admitting that I might, in fact, be wrong. Isn't that just a sign of weakness? Isn't that one of those Gibbs rules from NCIS? "Never apologize, it's a sign of weakness."

Well, no. Actually, it's a sign of strength, of growth, of maturity and of letting people see that God and His

purposes for you are at work IN your life
-for your betterment.

David, if you know your Bible, was a man
after God's heart. But this event in his
life is the best example of a bad example
of what it looks like when you choose to
walk in darkness. IE: Sin.

"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."

-1 John 1:5 ESV

We cannot have fellowship with God, while
we are comfortable with living in the
ways of the world.

David, you see had gotten comfortable.
His "house" was built, the Kings house:

"It happened, late one afternoon, when
David arose from his couch and was
walking on the roof of the king's house..."

-2 Samuel 11:2a ESV

And he let his guard down. How? Well, he
should have been with his army, not at
home having sent Joab in his place.

He was in the wrong place at the wrong
time, about to do the wrong thing with
the wrong person. A bit of a pattern
emerges here, doesn't it?

He had gotten too comfortable with his place and his position. God had blessed him, giving him the kingdom, as well as victory over his enemies. He let his guard down, and the enemy within went to work.

Just as the enemy of our souls likes and wants. An opening to work with, and did he ever go to work -through the poor choices of God's king:

"...he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

-2 Samuel 11:2b-5 ESV

How, in heavens name, did a man of after God's own heart not only get to a place like that, say nothing of actually acting upon it and following through with it?

He let his guard down, he thought he had arrived, and forgot that even though God

keeps us in His care, we have the responsibility to keep ourselves!

In other words, we have work to do, in order to stay right before God -identify and confess our sin, for all of our days:

"If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."

-1 John 1:6 ESV

Discipleship is more than simple lip service. It's action. John is not a preacher who would have a prime-time TV show.

He has seen too much, been through too many things, and I suspect had more than his fair share of failures, to be delicate about walking in darkness instead of the light.

Listen, don't say you have fellowship with Christ, if you are walking in a way that contradicts His teaching and the Scriptures.

This is a hard thing to hear, not just to say. Especially in our time. Not that it wasn't hard for John, but today, "sin" is such an archaic word, if it's used at all.

But, if we want to grow in our walk with Christ, and in our relationships with God and others, we have to deal with ourselves, our sin, our short-comings.

Why? So we can feel bad as if this was some form of victim mentality and self-abuse? No. In fact, it's just the opposite.

John will get us there soon enough. But right now, he is putting us on the right ground, "confessional ground", I call it. Where we recognize that outside of Jesus Christ, and what He has done for us on the Cross, we are in darkness.

That is nothing any of us want to hear. Again, Chuck Swindoll, in his study of this letter puts it this way about verse six:

"In contrast to God's nature as light, human nature in its fallen condition is dark and depraved. (*Think on what King David has done*) I know this isn't a popular topic for polite preachers today. Television's beaming, "it's all about you", pastors downplay our spiritual darkness and make it sound as if the key to success is to simply get in touch with our inner light of optimism, motivation, or purpose."

-Swindoll's Living Insights: Pg. 31

Again, think on King David. He was left to himself, and what happened? The problem with this, as John is teaching us here, is we have NO inner light, outside of Christ.

We cannot help ourselves get to that place of a "better me", or a "better you." No, David shows us painfully and clearly that this is not how it works.

You see, our help must come from outside -not inside. Outside the city, on a hill called "The Skull", where a cross stood. We need outside help -and that is what John is making clear for us:

"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."

-1 John 1:7 ESV

David made a huge mistake. It resulted in Bathsheba getting pregnant, David then schemes to cover it up by having Uriah recalled in the hopes that he would go home to his wife.

Seeing any light here as yet? No. When that didn't work, he ordered his general to send Uriah into the thick of the battle and abandon him there. The enemy will kill him. Murder by proxy.

Darkness! There is no light here, and God will not allow His king to live that way. Why? Because David is the man after God's own heart.

You cannot be my King in my world, my child and do those things and think you can walk that way in front of all who watch.

Listen, you can't make this up. You certainly wouldn't record it for posterity's sake if you wanted to paint a picture of "God's people are perfect, and don't sin."

Unless God wants us to see the truth. That without Him and His light in our lives we are just dead men walking. But God loves us far too much to leave us that way -so He challenges us!

That is just what John is teaching in these verses. Don't think for a minute that you can say you are alright or that you haven't sinned, or don't sin. That you are good enough or have some secret knowledge that gives you a free pass.

No, God is light, and if we are going to walk in that light, we will need to acknowledge that without Him, we are in darkness. We can stand in our garage and confess to high heaven that its light -

but if we ain't turned to switch, it's still dark!

God loved David enough to send a Nathan, to make sure David understood this fact. In 2 Samuel 12 the prophet Nathan appears. I leave that with you for homework, to read and pray through.

But he is David's prophet, who at the risk of his life challenges the King regarding what he has done. He tells him a story of a shepherd who steals a little sheep and David is livid, saying that man ought to die. Nathan says:

"You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites."

-2 Samuel 12:7-9 ESV

This is a defining (if not THE) moment in David's life. He could have Nathan

killed, just as King Saul had done to all the priests at NOB when he didn't like what they had done and said.

OR -and this is what makes him a man after God's heart - He can recognize his sin, admit it and repent of it.

God is not looking for perfection from you. Surprise of surprises, He already knows you aren't perfect, that's why He sent His son Jesus.

What God is looking for is truth. Truth by way of recognizing that we sin, and we need Him every day if we are to be successful.

There is never an expectation of perfection, except from ourselves. So, perhaps we should stop it. We are always our own worst enemies. Most especially when we cannot be honest with ourselves.

Application:

John is letting us know that we have an out, as it were when he gives us verse 9:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

-1 John 1:9 ESV

Not some cheap grace out, as if we can keep doing wrong because God will forgive

us. Paul is so very clear on that, as is the writer to the Hebrews:

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?"

-Romans 6:1-2 ESV

"For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries."

-Hebrews 10:26-27 ESV

John is preaching and teaching true grace -received and kept by genuine repentance, and action on our parts. Working out what God has worked in.

As if to reinforce the notion, John says:

"If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

-1 John 1:10 ESV

We are not left without hope! What we all need, and what we all have (if you are in Christ already), and can have if you call on Him, is a heart like David's.

You know, the guy who broke at least 5 of the 10 commandments on that awful day. I leave you with one last assignment from our opening reading, Psalm 51.

David's response, not to Nathan, but to God -whom he had sinned against. Sin has its consequences here, but ultimately when we sin, we sin against God.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

-Psalm 51:10-12 ESV

Why? Well, because of what John the Apostle is doing almost 1,000 years on:

"Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you."

-Psalm 51:13 ESV

Coming to God with this attitude, that is why John gives us verse 9 - God has made the way for the repentant heart because He loves us that much.

So much so, that He is pleading His case through the Apostle John to us, His children. That there is a right way to live in this world of darkness and

failure and chaos. In the light, in deep honest communion with God, and knit together as the people of God in His world as His community.