



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1st John 1:5-7

"The Eternal Light and the Fellowship"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] As I had mentioned to the 8:30 service, when I graduated from Theological Seminary, my goal was to go to China to minister the word of God there. I had received an appointment to teach in a theological seminary in Shanghai and since the Communists were coming in, I was not able to go, but I have always had a great interest in China for that reason. But I would have much preferred to go to Shanghai than that the Shanghai flu should have come to me, [Laughter] which it did when I went to Toronto and I'm blaming it on the Canadians. Although Dr. Howard said, "It's unlikely that that flu could incubate in a few days". But at any rate, it was quite an experience and it has lessened my desire to have gone to China if that was one of the things that one had to experience from time to time. Someone was mentioning to me this morning that they had anticipated getting the Leningrad flu, but the Shanghai flu came instead. Well, I don't want to try the Leningrad flu, but I do not recommend Shanghai flu to you.

We started 1 John about three weeks ago and perhaps some of you either were not here or you have forgotten that we looked at the preface to the epistle, the first four verses, so in our Scripture reading, I'm going to read not simply verses 5, 6, and 7, which we shall concentrate on in the message, but begin again with verse 1 and read the preface as well. So will you turn in your Bibles to 1 John? We'll begin reading in verse 1. Now

I'm reading from the Authorized Version. I will make a few small changes as we go on from time to time, but essentially the translation in the Authorized Version is generally accurate and so I am using that in the exposition of 1 John. The apostle writes,

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.:

Incidentally, I'm reading a book, which is one of John Owen's works, and the title of the study, which is in the second volume of his works, is *Communion with God*. And one of the things that John Owen, one of the greatest of the English theologians of the 17th Century, has thought to show in this work, *Communion with God*, is the fact that it is possible for us to have communion with the three persons of the Trinity and to know that we have communion with the three persons of the Trinity. In other words, there is a communion with the Father, a communion with the Son, a communion with the Holy Spirit, and the communion with the three persons of the Trinity has aspects that are different in each of the persons of the Trinity. One can see in anticipation of some of that here when John writes,

"We have fellowship and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full and this (I'm making a slight change there because the original text has the conjunction "and" instead of "then", although that could be a rendering of it and we're reading) and this is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness

at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus (the word "Christ" is probably not genuine here) the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we approach Thee through the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the expiatory and propitiatory sacrifice that he has offered. Expiating our sins, propitiating Thee, and making it possible for us to enjoy the forgiveness of sins, justification of life, membership in the family of God, and the countless other blessings that accrue to us from the atoning blood. We're indeed grateful and we thank Thee, Lord. We pray that our fellowship may truly be with the Father and with the Son in the Spirit for the glory of the name of the triune God. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the forgiveness of our sins and we rejoice in all of the ways in which Thou doest constantly minister to us.

We thank Thee, Lord, for the day in which we live and the fact that Thou hast placed us within it and called upon us to represent Thee in the world about us; a world that lies, according to this very epistle, in the evil one. Enable us, Oh God, as we walk, to not walk in darkness, but in the light into to which Thou hast brought us.

We pray Thy blessing upon the whole church of Christ. We ask Thy blessing upon all of the bodies of believers scattered over this globe who meet in the name of our Lord and seek to honor him and we pray Thy blessing upon Believers Chapel particularly, upon its leadership, and the members, and the friends who are here today, and the visitors. May, by Thy grace, we each be built up in and strengthened in our faith and be enabled by the word of God to serve Thee more fruitfully in our generation.

We thank Thee for the outreach of the believers in this body. We pray Thy blessing upon all of the attempts to make Christ known upon the Bible classes, upon the tape ministries, the publications ministries, and the radio ministries, and we especially give Thee thanks, Lord, for the many who serve voluntarily in making ministry available to individuals, not only in the United States, but to other continents as well.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for the supply of all of the needs that exist. Thou hast been gracious to us and we give Thee thanks. We pray for the sick. For those who have requested our prayers especially, Oh God, minister to them out of the power, and the strength, and the concern of the triune God. Give healing in accordance with Thy will. Give encouragement. May those who are feeble be strengthened and those who have difficult trials to undergo; encourage them, be with them through their trials.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for all that is ours in Christ and may, as we sing together, as we listen to the word of God together, may our thoughts be ministered to by our great God in heaven and may we leave in a relationship that is closer and more significant than we enjoyed when we came into this auditorium. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] I think on the fifth stanza, I was following along with Mark fairly well, [laughter] but up until that point, I'm not sure exactly which way I was going [laughter]. At 8:30, when Larry Hairston who leads the singing often at 8:30 looked at that hymn, he changed it [laughter] and sang the hymn either before or after, I've forgotten which, which is very common. So I did not get to sing that, but it's a great encouragement to have Mark McCracken here and so when I don't know them, I just kind of get in behind him [laughter] and let him sound out and then I try not to get him off key, but by stanza number five, Mark, I was singing right along with you. In fact, if you had stopped singing, the audience would have said, "Who has the beautiful voice [laughter] up there on the platform?"

This is the second in our series of studies in 1 John and the subject is "The Eternal Life and the Fellowship". Fellowship with God, the highest and greatest human experience, Adam knew it and lost it. Found it again, so far as Scripture is concerned, but knew it and lost it. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and David found it, lost it, and found it again. Elijah found it, lost it, found it again and never lost it as he was caught up into the presence of God and Enoch found it and never lost it.

When we think of the art world, we think of apprenticeship. In fact, I imagine there are very few artists who could not say that they have learned their art from being an apprentice of some artist. That is true of the art world. It's true of the business world. Almost every businessman, I'm sure, if you spoke with them, they would tell you they learned so much about the business world because they were associated with a certain successful businessman; an apprenticeship in business.

And in the sports world, it is truly a world of apprenticeship. No golfer, no football player, no baseball player could ever manage to succeed in his profession if he were not, in a sense, an apprentice of others. In fact, when summer comes and Thousand Oaks opens for the Cowboys in July, we'll see pictures that are in our sports pages of the field at Thousand Oaks and the Cowboys are beginning to practice and all around the field will be little boys from the age of eight, ten, on up to grown looking young men, watching those professional athletes, hoping to learn something from them, talking with them, following them around, engaging in the beginnings of what could be called athletic apprenticeship; heroes, sports heroes. To walk with God is the ultimate apprenticeship. It is, of course, something that never ends, but it should begin now.

John tells us in his epistle that there are some evidences of this apprenticeship of fellowship of which we all should be a part. He tells us, first of all, that one of the evidences of fellowship or communion with God is an ethical one. That is, "walking in the light", we're going to be reading in verse 7, for example, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light," that's an ethical evidence of fellowship with God to "walk in the

light" and the apostle will talk about that in not only this section that follows, but here and there throughout the epistle.

The second evidence is a theological one. It's specifically a Christological one because it has to do with the person of Christ. In fact, to put it very simply, it's the belief in Jesus of Nazareth as God's Son and Messiah. The apostle laid great stress upon that. He felt that it was sufficient to devote a great section of this epistle to that theological proposition that Jesus of Nazareth is truly God's Son and the Messiah.

Now if we judge the background of 1 John generally, accurately, the reason for that is that in Asia Minor and in the world of the Apostle John, in gnosticism and particularly in the Cyrenthian brand of Gnosticism, there was the particular view that was very common that Jesus of Nazareth was simply a man. Not really the Son of God, not a divine being, but simply a human being and that at a certain point in his ministry, often associated with the baptism as one might expect, the Messiah, the heavenly Christ, came upon him and he performed the will of God for a lengthy period of time. And finally, and sometimes this is associated in Irenaeus' writing and Eusebius, the church historians' accounts with the Gethsemane experience or at least the experience of the cross, that Christ departed from it and so he died as simply a man, Jesus of Nazareth.

John, of course, saw that if that were really true then we do not really have a salvation. We do not have a divine Trinity and many other things would be true and so he wrote to counteract that heresy. But as is so often the case when a heresy is proclaimed by men who profess a great deal of Christianity, individuals who are not grounded in the Scriptures, not grounded in the word of God, in John's day, not grounded in the truth as the apostles had taught it, they become wobbly. It becomes difficult for them to respond to life itself. They are disturbed and upset. They do not have the assurance and security that comes from the knowledge of the truth of God or the revelation of God and Christ. And so John wrote the epistle to shore up, to strengthen those who had become wobbly.

One of the interesting things about heresy, as I mentioned in the message three or so weeks ago, is that error may win some skirmishes, but it never wins a war. Error is always seeking to disturb and upset us. Satan would love to upset every believer in this room and others as well, but while individuals may be upset, and individuals even may become castaways, nevertheless, error never wins the war.

The evidence of that is that we have the word of God before us. We have the Scriptures and we also have the testimony of the Christian church down through the years. We win! We will always win! The reason we will always win is simply this that our Lord is the foundation of the church and he in his word has guaranteed that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church of Christ. So while error may abound, while many individuals may become wobbly in their faith, disturbed and upset, we are on a victory roll in Christ. Let us never forget that.

But the apostle felt it was very necessary to speak plainly with regard to the error of his day. That's why we speak plainly with regard to the error of our day. Any and some occasionally individuals may accuse of a lack of love. It's not lack of love, it's love. It's the love of God that causes an individual to be upset and concerned and to truly hate the error that disturbs the saints of God and often is the human apparent reason for deterring people from contact and fellowship with God and Christ.

Well, the apostle has begun his epistle with a marvelous preface that we have looked at and now he turns to the nature of God and deduces the conditions and hindrances of divine fellowship. Nothing could be greater, my Christian friend, then to enjoy communion with God. Get down upon your knees. Get by your bedside or by your chair or wherever you pray and if you don't have any place to pray, find a place. Get down upon your knees and spend some time with the Lord God asking him to make it possible for you to enjoy a divine apprenticeship in communion with him.

Now the epistle of John is a great aid to that and the apostle begins the 5th verse with the message from the Son of God and when he says, "this then" or "and this is the

message which we have heard of him", I'm taking that "him" as a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ in the light of the preceding context. So he links the message concerning joyous fellowship with the Father and with the Son and for him it is come to him from the Son. So it is the message which John says, "We have heard from him". In other words, the apostle tells us right at the beginning that he's not giving us an apostolic revelation. I'm sorry, let me turn that around, that was an error. He is not saying that he is giving an apostolic discovery. This is not something that he has discovered. This is something that has been revealed to him. Of course, for an apostle to say, "I've discovered this" would be a matter of significance for us and I surely would want to listen to it, but the apostle does not claim that this is something that he has discovered. This is something he claims has been revealed to him. "This is the message which we have heard from him."

Now the description of the message is startling. You might, I'm sure, if you had never read this epistle, you might have imagined all kinds of messages that the apostle might have spoken about, but you would never have come to the message as he has set it forth. "This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." In fact, this is something not found specifically in the Old Testament. It's not even found in our Lord's teaching, specifically. That is, we don't have anything in Scripture to this point that says, "God is light". In other words, the idea set forth by John is that light is the nature of God. "God is light." Later on, of course, we'll have occasion to say something about "God is love" and "God is spirit" and probably even refer to our God as a consuming fire, but what he is saying is that the nature of God is light. He doesn't say, "God is The Light" nor is he "a light". That's found in the Old Testament, but he says, "God is light".

Now if you were looking at the original text, you would note that there is no article with any of these three statements: "God is spirit", "God is love", "God is light". We are talking about the nature of God and let me say this right here, all the collective human wisdom could never have and never has taught us so much as this that "God is light".

You cannot find it anywhere. It is something that has come by divine revelation. "God is light." It's not surprising when you read expositions of the brief expression, "God is light" that all kinds of ideas should be offered by human expositors.

One of the most significant was offered by a British commentator in which he pointed out that, and this incidentally has been cited by almost every commentator which is an evidence of the fact that they have generally regarded it as at least worth repeating and probably accurate, but the expression "God is light" may be looked at physically. And if you look at it physically then the idea is the idea of diffusive glory and splendor. For example, in the Old Testament in the 104th Psalm, we read concerning the Lord, "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment". That's not the same as "God is light", but at least one can see the similarity. There is the idea of diffusive glory and splendor.

One thing that you can learn from this immediately is the fact that God wishes to be seen and he wishes to be known. "God is light" and the diffusiveness is one of the greatest of the characteristics of light. In fact, when the sun comes up in the morning and light floods our little world, we have an indication of the diffusiveness of light. "God is light". He wishes to be seen. He wishes to be known.

But the term "light" suggests intellectual things as well and then the idea of truth and salvation becomes prominent. Again in the Psalms, in the 27th Psalm, the Psalmist writes something that pertains to this when he says in Psalm 27 and verse 1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" "The Lord is my light and my salvation", intellectually the idea of truth and salvation. Light, on the great issues of life, comes from the Lord God in heaven. As the Psalmist also says, "in Thy light shall we see light". How significant that is. No philosopher could have ever put it any more plainly than that. That true knowledge ultimately is the knowledge that is seen in the light of God.

He interprets finally everything and everything is what it is and is to be interpreted as to what it is by the way in which God interprets it. "In Thy light shall we see light". And, of course, finally, and specifically in this context, "God is light" suggests the morals out of God or the idea of holiness. Living in darkness is incompatible with fellowship with God. To the extent that we live in darkness, we are excluded from the fellowship of God. How important it is for us to recognize this, if "God is light and there is no darkness at all in him", the extent of which we are in darkness, is the extent of which we are excluded from fellowship with him.

One of the striking things about the Bible is the fact that light is the first product of the divine creative energy. God said, "Let there be light", the earnest and condition of order, beauty of life, of growth, and joy. Of all the phenomena, it best represents the elements of the perfection of God and as someone has said, "This word 'light' is at once the simplest and the fullest and the deepest which can be used in human discourse. It is addressed to every man who has eyes and who has ever looked on the sun. It tells us not only of a goodness and truth without flaw, it tells us of a goodness and truth that are always seeking to spread themselves, to send forth rays that penetrate everywhere and scatter the darkness that opposes them". The term 'darkness', the contrast on the other hand, sums up all the elements of evil: foulness, secrecy, repulsiveness, and gloom.

And isn't it striking, and particularly and this time of the year when everybody who has any natural love for plant life is thinking about watching the ground and seeing some of the things come up, isn't it striking that in all but the lowest forms of existence, darkness inevitably produces decay and death? Go under your house sometime if you're on pier and beam, and look at some of the life under it. That pale looking little life that cannot really grow. An evidence of the kind of life one finds in darkness just existing. Everything of the kind is excluded from the nature of God. There is no darkness in him. Incidentally, it does not say there is no darkness in his presence, but there is no darkness in him.

Now I want you, for just a moment, to think about the individuals who receive this message. I know that you are the elite intellectuals of the City of Dallas and Texas. You may be broke, but nevertheless [laughter] you're elite and intellectual, but just think for a moment about the individuals to whom this great message came. Let's put ourselves in the position of the converted idolaters of Asia Minor, for John was writing to them evidently. His readers were reared in heathenism. Even looking at the word of God, not having studied some of ancient mythology, I had to be suffused with that when I went through school because my major was in the classics. And so I had to read Bulfinch's *Mythology* and all of those stories that had to do with the ancient Greek and Roman deities. But these readers were reared in heathenism and they had been taught in their youth to worship Zeus and Hermes, Artemis of the Ephesians, Bacchus of the Philadelphians, and of Aphrodite of the Spartanians and many, many other gods beside. Gods as someone has put it, "stained in the belief of their worshippers with foul human vices". Gods so evil in some of their characteristics that the Apostle Paul said concerning them, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God". They had gods, and if you studied mythology you know, they had gods who could cheat and lie; gods who were licentious and unchaste; gods who were spiteful and malignant toward men; who were adulterers; who were quarrelsome and abusive towards other gods, and they were accustomed to think of a god head as of a mix major like their own only on a larger scale: good and evil; kind and unkind; pure and wanton; made of darkness and light.

Now these individuals hearing one of the apostles or one of the others of the apostle's disciples hear of a god who is all truth, all righteousness, all goodness, in whom there is no trickery, no wantonness, no evil, no smallest amount of malice or delight in evil, no darkness at all, a god to be absolutely trusted and honored. You know to have untruth and cruelty and wrong imputed to a government, a government of the universe would be terrible. To have it in the United States of America, to have a government that

is absolutely corrupt from the president on down, nothing could be so poisonous to our society then in something like that. To own a treacherous friend is bad. To have a thankless child is bad and to have a wicked god, to have a wicked president is terrible.

To have a wicked god is that much more evil and, therefore, to see, as someone has put it, "the sky washed clean of these foul shapes and to have the haunting idols with their wanton spells and unbounded powers for evil, these veritable demons, banished from the imagination" and life of an individual was a tremendous blessing. "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all." What a blessing to have a god like that. Even a sinner such as I am can appreciate what a marvelous blessing it is to have a god of purity and righteousness and justice.

Now, the apostle having made that fantastic statement, "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all" look at Asperius in compatible position. It's the first of three false pleas that he will talk about each beginning with the little phrase or clause: "If we say" verse 6, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth"; verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"; and verse 10, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us". That's the worst of all, isn't it? We not only lie, we make him a liar.

Now you can see just from reading the 6th verse that conduct is no matter of indifference. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and we do not do the truth". In one sense all believers live in darkness. This is a world darkened by sin. Later on in this very epistle, the apostle will say, "The whole world lieth in the evil one". The world darkened by sin. We live in it. So in that sense, we can say, "All believers live in darkness", but in another sense, which the Scripture makes also just as clearly, we cannot walk in darkness. In fact, the Apostle Paul states that specifically in Ephesians chapter 5 when he says, "But ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye

light in the Lord: walk as children of light". We cannot walk in darkness if we are believers in Christ.

Now I don't mean to say that we cannot sin, but I'm saying that we cannot walk in darkness; that is, our bent of life cannot be the bent of life of darkness, of foul sinning rebellion and disobedience to God. No one who lives like this can say, "We have fellowship with him" and walk in darkness. He's lying. "He's not doing the truth", so the apostle says. One might think of a man on a stage, for example, everything is darkened. The spotlight is shining. He walks all over the stage as the spotlight follows him. He walks in the light in the midst of general darkness. That may illustrate what the apostle and others might think is a good illustration of the fact that in one sense, we live in darkness. In another sense, we cannot go on walking in darkness.

This is really one of the evangelical problems that we have today, as you well know. I don't have to go over that again. But we have prominent evangelical voices, many of them charismatic, many of them not charismatic who have made great claims of being in fellowship with God. Who assure us after their sins that they have been forgiven by God, but their lives have been one constant walking in the darkness. The apostle's word for such life, "If we say we have fellowship with him, and we walk in darkness, we are lying, and we are not doing the truth".

I hasten to say, it is certainly true that Christians fall into sin. We're not talking about that. We're talking about the bent of life. H. G. Wells said once, "A man may be a very bad musician and may yet be passionately in love with music" and it is certainly true, an individual may truly love our Lord, but may have fallen into sin from time to time and be repentant and sorry and disturbed and, actually, even approaching despair with nevertheless a love for God. But, generally speaking, such a person is recovered by the Holy Spirit and brought onto a different level of Christian living. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we are lying, and we're not doing the truth".

Isn't it interesting that the apostle says, "The truth has no exclusive reference to the sphere of the intellect".

We're inclined to think particularly in a place like Believers Chapel, where I think we have a relatively high level of the exposition of the word of God, at least we try to do that, we try not to leave you in the dark, we try to give you an exposition of the word of God that is conformable to the New Testament, to the original language according to principles, sound principles of hermeneutics and Christian theology. We're inclined to think in an environment like this that being a fruitful and faithful Christian consists in the understanding of certain theological propositions.

Now you know me well enough to know that I often speak about the importance of knowing certain theological propositions. Christian theology, no one can possibly please God in his Christian life who doesn't understand Christian theology. What we believe inevitably manifests itself in our life, but we should not separate those two. We should not separate what we think and how we act. And so when he says here, "We lie and we do not do the truth", he lets us know that the sphere of the intellect, while important, is not the only thing in our Christian life. We are responsible not simply to think right, but to do what is right. In other words, the truth is not simply what we think with the intellect, but it is that which is conformable to God's nature and will and is inclusive of the kind of life that we live.

One of the commentators has said, "What we have here is the lie of the lip" and we also have the lie of the life characteristic of us as human beings who are sinners. I read this week one expositor was talking about a man who had no concept of life after death. As he was walking through a cemetery he saw an inscription, "Not dead, just sleeping" to which he remarked, "He ain't fooling no one but himself". Well, actually, he was speaking the truth, if he were a believing man, but nevertheless the comment has a certain appropriateness. When we claim fellowship with God and we walk in darkness, my Christian friend, we are not fooling anyone least of all are we fooling God.

The apostle states it very plain. If you live in such a way as violates the principles of righteousness, and holiness, and justice, and you talk about God and you talk about fellowship with him, and you talk about Christian things, you are a reproach to the Christian faith and sooner or later, it will out. Be sure your sin will find you out. We all know the experience of this. It's something that we as believers should seek by God's grace and power and help to avoid. Deliver us from injustice. Deliver us from failure to pay our income tax, to failure to do other things that are right and just and good. They are the way by which we manifest the life that is within us and "if we say that we have fellowship with him, and we walk in darkness" we're not fooling anyone, certainly not the Lord.

Now the final verse is a word of contrast, the apostle states, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son" notice, you Cyrenthians, "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin". We walk in the light. He is in the light. Isn't that interesting? If we walk "in" the light as he "is" in the light. We walk through time. He lives in the eternal light. We don't have time to talk further about that.

I want to notice the consequences of this condition for fellowship. He states, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" and I take that to be not simply fellowship with God, although the context previously makes that point very plainly, but also with other believers who are walking in the light. "We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin".

That may be understood in two ways, that last clause. It may be understood as cleansing from the guilt of sin by the atoning death of Christ. "We have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin". A characteristic truth and fact of the Christian faith; the blood of Christ in his atoning sacrifice cleanses us from all sin that may be the understanding that we are to have of this; if so, the reference is probably primarily to the guilt of sin and the cleansing by the atoning death of Christ.

Let me say something here, nothing could be more significant for us than to understand our guilt. We can never truly appreciate what Christ has done if we do not understand our guilt. It is so important that we recognize that as human beings, we have a responsibility to divine justice. Each one of us lives responsible to the divine justice and if we are responsible to the divine justice, my Christian friend, my non-Christian friend, there is no way in which we can be saved apart from the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The more I understand how responsible I am to divine justice and divine holiness and responsible to divine punishment, the more I sense the cleansing, the liberating power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let me put it this way as last night after I'd finished my message and I was thinking about some of these things, I was reading a work, I ran across some statements that I thought were remarkable. "There is no knowledge and no experience that will stand a man in such stead in those moments that try the soul as the experience of the pure sense of guilt quenched by the pure blood of Christ". How wonderful that is. When a person realizes how much he owes, how much he is a debtor to divine justice and the inevitable coming divine judgment upon man and then reflects upon the blood of Jesus his Son as cleansing us from all sin, you cannot help but get down upon your knees and give thanks to God for the marvelous grace shown to us in Christ.

Joseph Butler wrote a book, one of the important books of the 18th Century. It was called the *Analogy of Religion*. Bishop Butler, that's what he came later on, wrote this important, rational, empirical defense of the Christian faith. It was one of the most important books of the 18th Century. Today many people regard this book as of no real great significance; although it's still read. Bishop Butler was something of a moralist, as one might expect, in reading his book. When he was dieing, in his last days, as they were drawing nearer, as the time in which he would appear before the great divine tribunal drew nearer, where the highest and the lowest of us must alike stand in judgment, in one way or another, he trembled in spirit. He turned this way and that his

friends said, "For some kind of peace of conscience". And finally one of his clergy citing some texts of Scriptures to him cited the words, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin". A flush of peace and joy passed like the bland west wind through his fevered conscience as he made answer and said, "I have read those words a thousand times, but I never felt their meaning as now".

Let me say to you, my friend sitting in the audience, when the time comes for you to draw your final breaths, there will be nothing that will satisfy you like the truth of the blood of Jesus his Son. Someone has called that the "pathos of doctrine". "The blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin".

Now it's possible that what John is talking about is purification from the power of sin, sin in our daily life by confession of sin, by openness to God. Like John 13:10 where he says, "He that is bathed, bathed all over, needeth not saving to get his feet washed, but the truth is the same" The truth of the atoning sacrifice, which delivereth us from guilt once and for all, and the benefits of it, which keep on cleansing us from sin throughout our life. Time is up.

The exultant marvelous note of a god who is light; a God with whom we may have communion. It's like the joy of daybreak after fearful night. It's like health after the Shanghai flu. It's like freedom after bondage. The Lord Jesus said, "I am come a light into the world that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness". Judas left the company of the apostles. John significantly writes, "He went out and it was night". To leave the company of our Lord and to leave the company of the apostles is to walk in darkness. He walked in darkness. He continued his walk in darkness. He continued his walk in darkness until finally he was taken by suicide and the blackness of darkness forever is his experience.

What a marvelous thing it is to read in the word of God that God has flung the heavens open, the fellowship is offered, a light sphere created around him where we may walk. There the puzzles of life find their answer for as the Psalmist said centuries ago,

"With Thee is the fountain of life and in Thy light, we shall see light". Come to the light. Trust in him. Believe in him. Learn of him. Enjoy the apprenticeship of communion with God.

If you're here and you've never believed in Christ, you need the deliverance from the guilt of sin. That's provided by the blood of Jesus, God's Son. May God in his grace touch your heart. May you come to him. No better time to believe in him than right now in your heart. Give yourself to him. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Lord, for these marvelous words, words we cannot, of course, comprehend fully, never shall. We cannot even come to the unapproachable light, but we thank Thee for the Scripture which reminds us that Thou art light, holy, the source of our salvation, the source of truth, and a God of all splendor in the forgiveness of sins. Oh Lord, if there are some here...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]