

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God: The Source of Light

Scripture: 1 John 1:5

Code: 62-5

The Source of Light

As you know, we are in a study of 1 John and I want to have you open your Bible tonight again to 1 John chapter 1. Before we come to the Lord's table, I want us to look at the Word of God. And it is a fitting text, 1 John chapter 1 verse 5 through chapter 2 verse 1. Let me read this text for you.

:And this is the message we have heard from Him and announced to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us."

I've simply titled this portion of Scripture, "Confession of sin, a certain proof of salvation." We've been saying all along that 1 John is a certain word in an uncertain age. And the first certainty that John affirmed for us in the opening four verses was the certainty of the incarnation, the certainty of God in flesh, the living word of life, the manifest eternal life which was with the Father and manifested to us, none other than Jesus Christ. The first certainty then is the coming into the world of the Son of God.

And the second certainty that John addresses himself to is this matter of the certainty of salvation. He is certain that God in the flesh came. He saw Him, he heard Him his hands handled Him. Then it becomes a matter of are we certain since we know that God did come into the world in human flesh in the form of Jesus Christ, are we certain of our salvation in Him? And so the matter of certainty with regard to salvation becomes really the theme of the rest of the epistle, although he will again on several occasions cycle back through the certainty concerning Christ. The rest of the epistle spends most of its time dealing with certain proofs of salvation that we are actually in Christ and the beneficiaries of the incarnation.

The first one that he presents to us is the confession of sin. That is a certain proof of salvation. Now John begins this section in verse 5 with this word, "And this is the message we have heard from Him and announced to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all." I'm not sure tonight

we're going to get past that, but this is a teaching time and I want to give you everything I can to enrich this what appears on the surface simple understanding. John tells us about the nature of God. Other gospel writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us what God did. They tell us what Jesus Christ who is God did, what He said. But John features who He is. John is concerned that we know something of the nature of God, not just His works, something of the nature of Jesus Christ. If you read John in his gospel, chapter 4 verse 24, John says, "God is spirit." Here in the verse that we're looking at, verse 5, he says, "God is light." Over in chapter 4 and verse 8 he says, "God is love." John wants us to know who God is, not just what He does, has done, will do.

And the same is true of John's approach to Christ. If you read the gospel of John, Jesus is repeatedly presented as the great "I am." Presenting, first of all, His essential nature, as well as telling us something of His mighty power in His works and the words that He spoke. Here John focuses on God as the foundation for what is to come. And he focuses on the reality that God is light. And that becomes foundational for the rest of the epistle, as well as for the very passage I just read. God is light. Not God is a light, not God is the light, but God is light. God is essential light. That reality is basically presented throughout all of Scripture and I want to take some time tonight to help you understand what that means.

If I say to you God is spirit, you understand that. That is God is immaterial. We follow that up with God is eternal spirit, that is He is eternally immaterial. He has no physical form. That's very clear in Scripture. That's not hard to understand. And if I say to you God is love, you understand that. You understand what it means to love and it can be demonstrated that God is love in His attitude toward the other members of the Trinity, His attitude toward the human race which Scripture says is clearly manifest love. But when I say to you God is light, what does that mean? What does it say when it says God is light? The reality of that is very, very important for an understanding of the rest of this epistle because this is so foundational to the nature of God. We do know in the Old Testament that God appeared as light. That He manifested Himself, for example, to the children of Israel in the account that's given to us in the book of Exodus when Moses went up into the mountain while they were wandering in the wilderness to receive from God the Law. You remember he was told by God that he should go and lead the people. Moses was fearful about his ability to do that and he said, "I'm not going to do that unless You go with me, Your presence goes with me." To which God responded, "My presence will go with you," to which Moses responded, "How am I going to know that? Show me Your glory?"

You remember the account in Exodus 33 and 34, how God tucked Moses in a cave or some cleft of the rock and then God allowed a portion of His glory to pass by. Not the full glory because God said no man can see me and live. And the glory that Moses saw was some kind of light, some kind of light. In fact, the light that emanated from the presence of God, got on the face of Moses so that

when he came down the mountain to speak to the children of Israel, his face was shining with the reflection of that light. The apostle Paul even writes about that in the third chapter of 2 Corinthians. So God manifest Himself to Moses as light. He manifested Himself to the children of Israel by leading them during the day, you remember, by a cloud, a cloud of light, as it were, in the sky, and at night, another form of light, a pillar of fire by which they were led. When at the end of the book of Exodus the tabernacle was completed, the light which represented God came down from heaven, the Shekinah, the presence of God, manifest light came down and came into the tabernacle and dwelt in the Holy of Holies. Later on in Israel's history when the temple was completed, the permanent place representing the presence of God, the glory of God again came down and dwelt in the temple. God manifested Himself on those occasions as light. Also we see in the New Testament that Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration allowed the disciples to see who He really was and He manifested Himself as light. You remember He was transfigured before them as shining light that sent them into a comma of terror.

So God manifests Himself as light. First Timothy 6:15 and 16 describes God this way, "The blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of Lords who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light." And that echoes what God said to Moses, "No man can see Me and live, the light is too glorious, too all glorious for any creature to see it in its fullness." In Psalm 104 verses 1 and 2 it says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, O Lord my God, You are very great, You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering Yourself with light as with a cloak." As we cover ourselves with a garment, with clothing, so God covers Himself with light.

Now not only is God light in Himself, essential light, but He is the source of our light. Psalm 27:1, very familiar Psalm, familiar opening, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." What does that mean? God is light, I understand that He manifested Himself as light. He is my light but what does that mean? Well we find out a little more about what that means when we come to Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ is also light. In fact, Jesus Christ is called the light of the world, as we shall see.

God is light. God conveys that light to us. Jesus Christ is that very light of God incarnate. Now putting that all together it's a pretty simple thought. God is light, He grants that light to us, but it is conveyed to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at 2 Corinthians 4:4, a very important portion of Scripture in this regard. Second Corinthians 4:4, stay with me on this, I'm going to help you to understand this concept of light, 2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us that the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving in order that they might not see the light. What light? The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. So here we see that the light that is essentially God, comes to us through the image of God who is Christ. The light shines from God through Christ to us. Verse 5 then, Paul says, "We do not preach ourselves but we preach Christ Jesus because He's the source of light." Verse 6, "For God who said light shall shine out of darkness is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." So there it comes again.

God is light. He conveys that light to us through the glory of Christ by means of the gospel...by means of the gospel. God is light. Jesus Christ is light. And we become light through Christ. This...this idea, this concept appears in a number of other places and we'll look at the New Testament, Colossians 1:12 says, "The Father God has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." And then he goes on to say, "He delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." It is the Kingdom of His beloved Son that is the domain of light. Light then comes to us through the Son. We enter into the Kingdom of light through the Son who provides redemption, the forgiveness of sins. God is light. Jesus Christ is the very image of the invisible God. It is through Him that the very light of God is conveyed to us in the gospel. Philippians also chapter 2 verse 15 says that we appear in the world as light. We appear in the world as lights. Backing up yet again to Ephesians chapter 8, Paul writes, "You were formerly darkness but now you are light in the Lord." Peter, getting on the same bandwagon, as it were, 1 Peter 2:9 says, "God has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." Jesus says in Matthew 5:14, "You are the light of the world." God is light. Jesus Christ is light. And we who come to Christ share in that light.

Now that demonstrates the relationship of light but doesn't define what it is. What is it? Listen to Psalm 36:9, the psalmist writes. "For you...with you... for with you is the fountain of life, in Your light we see light." Now just think about that for a moment. With you is the fountain of life. In Your light we see light. That is a Hebrew parallelism. Those are two statements saying the same thing. You are the fountain of life. In Your light we see fountain of light. What that verse does is equate life with...what?...life. That equates light with life. It's only because of God that we have life. It's only because of His light that we see light. Life and light are linked in Psalm 36 verse 9. Life and light are linked. And right there you have the first way to understand the concept that God is light. God is light in the sense that God is life. As light emanates from its source, life emanates from its source.

To show you this I want to take you back to John's gospel, chapter 1...John's gospel chapter 1. This is one of those wonderful foundational truths that's going to enrich your understanding of Scripture every time you come across these ideas. In John 1, "In the beginning was the Word," that's Jesus Christ, "The Word was with God, the Word was God, He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." Why? Verse 4, "In Him was life...and listen to this...and the life was the light." You see it? There you have John defining life as light, light as life. And verse 5, "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it." That life was the light of men. The eternal Word, the one who created everything, the one who made everything, apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. He is clearly the source of life. Whoever is the creator is the source of life. God created *ex nihilo*(?) out of nothing everything that exists and therefore demonstrates He is the source

of life. And Jesus Himself being God is the Creator, all things were created by Him and for Him. He is the source of life, verse 4, in Him was life and the life is the light. Light equals life. Light equals life. Men would not live if God hadn't given them life. There is no other source for life other than God.

That's true physically. That's what he's saying here. All things came into being by Him. He's talking about creation here. In Him was life, all that lives received their life from Him and including mankind and life is that light. God demonstrates that He is life by manifesting Himself in light. Gives that life to man physically in creation, He gives it spiritually through the new creation and the new birth. The eternal life possessed by God and by the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit, the eternal life is the source of all life, all things that live both physically and spiritually, both temporally and eternally. Everything that lives takes its life from the source who is God.

Speaking of Christ again, Colossians 1:16, "By Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created by Him and for Him, He's before all things and in Him all things hold together." The Lord who created is the source of all life. Life with God is given to all that lives. That's true temporally and it's also true spiritually. Our eternal life comes from God. Through His Son by the gospel, that becomes then the discussion starting in verse 5 of John 1. "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness didn't comprehend it. There came a man sent from God, his name was John, John the Baptist, he came for a witness that he might bear witness of the light that all might believe through him, he was not the light." Obviously John the Baptist wasn't the creator, he's not the source of life. He was not the light but he came that he might bear witness of the light, that he might point to, verse 9, the true light which coming into the world enlightens every man. And that is a very simple statement. Everybody who lives, lives because he's received life from the Creator. The Creator is the source of all life, physical life and spiritual life, temporal life and eternal life. So at the beginning of the chapter we hear that He is the source of all created life, now we find that He is the source of spiritual life because John is pointing to Him as the one who is the true light. Then in verses 10 to 13, that eternal life becomes the theme. "He was in the world, the world was made through Him, the world didn't know Him. He came to His own, those who were His own did not receive Him but as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God." He gave them spiritual life. They were born spiritually. If they believed in His name, they were born, verse 13, they received life, not human life, not by blood or the will of the flesh or the will of man, but from God.

Light is life. And God is the source of all life whether it's physical and temporal, whether it's spiritual and eternal. When we talk about "God is light," we're talking about God as the source of all life.

Now if you look over to the second chapter of John, and into the third chapter, come to the end of chapter 2 starting in verse 23 you could...you'll read this on your own, I won't go through it, down to

verse 21 of chapter 3, through this section John emphasizes that all people are in need of this life. And this very wonderful story here is the story about a man named Nicodemus. And Jesus said to the man, "What you need is life." Verse 3, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again," you need to be born, you need to enter into eternal life. If you're not, you'll never see the Kingdom of God. Verse 5, "Unless one is born of water and the spirit, he can't enter the Kingdom of God." And then down in verse 14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes may in Him have eternal...what?...life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." It's all about life.

But notice this. There's a change as you come down to verse 19, "And this is the judgment, not that the life had come into the world but that the light is come into the world."

That is the source of spiritual life, just as He is the source of all natural life. "The light has come into the world and man loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and doesn't come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Light is life. Light, as John presents it, is the eternal life of God. And the passage that we see there in John chapter 3, light, life and even the term salvation is used all relating to the same great reality, eternal life. God then is the source of all life, including eternal life. He dispenses that eternal life to us so that we become the light, through the light incarnate who is Jesus Christ. And for that, turn to chapter 8 and verse 12. Jesus speaking again to the people on the Mount of Olives said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness." Listen to this, "But shall have the light of...what?...the light of what? Life...the light that is life. He is the source of life. He is life because He is God. He not only is life, He gives life. Whoever receives Him receives that life and so we become the possessors of life eternal. God is the light who gives to us the light through His Son who is that light.

The same idea appears again in John chapter 12 verse 46, "I have come...Jesus says in verse 46...as light into the world." What He means by that is He didn't come to bring information, He came to bring life. "I've come as light into the world that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness." And what happens when you believe in Christ, what is He talking about? You don't just receive information, you don't just receive illumination. You receive life. That's the point. And down in verse 50 He even mentions eternal life. Back in verse 47 He came, He says, to save the world. Saving the world, giving eternal life, bringing light is the same thing. Light equals eternal life.

Well, with that in mind turn back to 1 John. And when you come to 1 John, at this point, and you read again verse 5, "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you that God is light

and in Him there is no darkness at all." Does that take on some new meaning for you? I hope if you were listening. What does that mean "God is light?" He doesn't mean that just that God is just information, it means that God is life, He is the source of all life, especially as far as the gospel is concerned and the New Testament is concerned, especially eternal life for all who believe. And in God's life there is no darkness at all. What does that mean? There is no death, there is no dying. There is nothing contrary to life. And since God is life and light and no darkness and no death, and Christ is life and light and no darkness and no death, and we have been given that life, there is then for us no death. We, like Christ, and like God live forever in that eternal life.

Now that then poses the question, who possesses this, right? How can we be sure that we have this life? Well, it's not just if we say we have it, verse 6, it's if we, verse 7, walk in the light. And John then sets up a series of contrasts that we're going to look at starting next week. John then goes on to discuss who is really a possessor of the light, who really has the life, as opposed to those who are still in the darkness. That basically sets up the rest of the book.

You notice this theme comes back a few times. Turn to chapter 2 and verse 9, it might be on the same page. Chapter 2 verse 9, "The one who says he's in the light," that doesn't do it. "You say you have the life, you say you're in the light, you hate your brother? You're in the darkness." Verse 10, "The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there's no cause for stumbling in him." Verse 11, "The one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, doesn't know where he's going because the darkness has blinded his eyes." So this is the way it goes through this epistle. It's a contrast between who is in the light, who has the light and who does not. Even over in chapter 5 verses 11 and 12, the same thing is basically emphasized. "The witness is this that God has given us eternal life, this life is in His Son, he who has the Son has the life, he who doesn't have the Son of God doesn't have the life." And remember, life and light are synonymous.

So let's go back to chapter 1 verse 5. When John starts after the introduction of the first four verses in which he affirms the reality of the incarnation and himself as a personal eyewitness, as he starts in to the main emphasis of his epistle, it is critical to have a foundation. And the foundation is that God is light, that's the foundation, God is the source of life, God has given that life through His Son to those who believe. Then the question arises, how do we know who has received that light? How do we know who possesses the life, the eternal life of God? So John puts himself in a position, you could say he's poised to reject claims by those who have no right to claim the light, and to affirm the reality of salvation to those who do have a right to claim the light.

Now remember, there is a polemic tone in all of this because John is trying to protect the churches to whom he writes from deceivers, false teachers, false prophets, liars. John's passion is for the truth. And he wants to expose the liars. And so this whole epistle is at the very foundation of the safety of the church. It is being able to distinguish who really has eternal life. Who really has the light. Who is

really in the fellowship. And who is not. Because false teachers are successful because they claim to be in the light. They claim to know the truth. They claim to have the life of God, to be possessors of eternal life. And we're going to see that the first test that John applies to determine whether somebody is really in the light, really possesses the life, really has received eternal life is their attitude toward sin...their attitude toward sin. And in the passage that is before us in this first chapter, John attacks the notion that someone can have eternal life who denies sin. It's a rather simple test to know who possesses eternal life, they confess their sin. And so now you know where we're going in the epistle, where John is going and how important it is that he starts this section by saying, "And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you." And he's saying, "This is what I'm telling you because I heard it from Jesus, God is light. This is not my opinion, this is a message we heard from Him, from the incarnate one, the word of life, light incarnate and we're telling it to you. I'm telling you what God in human flesh told me."

Now I want to just mention one other thing that I think will help you. We now understand that when we talk about God as light, we're talking about life. God as the source of life. But there are a couple of things that we want to attach to that. I think they can be easily understood throughout Scripture. There are some properties of God's life that are important to understand. To say that God is life is a general statement, but let's get more specific. When you look at Scripture you will often find light associated with two things. First of all, it is associated with truth. And secondly, it is associated with virtue. When you read through the Scripture you will find that light often indicates truth, there's an intellectual side to it, a knowledge side. And on the other hand you will find that light often speaks of moral conduct. And to show you that, because I think you need to fill up your concept of light, God as light obviously has those two properties of being absolutely true and absolutely pure. God's life is true and holy. And it's an editing process right here in my mind as I stand here and decide how many verses I want to show you, but, for example, here's just a familiar statement, "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." That looks at Scripture as light that is true. Proverbs 6:23, "The commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light." So there's an intellectual aspect to this light. The light of God, the life of God is inextricably linked to, characterized by truth. That's very important to recognize. You can't even talk about the light of the gospel without talking about the truth of the gospel. You can't talk about the Word of God as light without talking about its truthfulness. Psalm 119:130, "The unfolding of Thy words gives light." So that the life of God is characterized by the truth, it features the truth. Very often, as I said, you'll read the Scripture and you'll come across passages of Scripture in which light refers to the truth. It is light to our otherwise dark minds.

But you'll also find, and I won't take the time to go through all kinds of Scriptures on this because our time is nearly gone, light also appears in Scripture in a moral sense. It appears as holiness, virtue, righteousness. For example, in Isaiah 5:20, and there are so many illustrations, I'm just picking a few favorites of mine, it says, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil," another way to say that,

who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, in that little comparison, darkness equals evil, and light equals good. That kind of discussion appears a number of places in the Old Testament as it does a number of places in the New Testament. We read one earlier, Ephesians 5 and verse 8, if you kind of follow along. "You were formerly darkness, now you are light in the Lord, walk as children of light for the fruit...verse 9...of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." There you have them both.

What is the characteristic of this life? The characteristic is righteousness and truth so that you are learning what's pleasing to the Lord and you are no longer participating in the unfruitful deeds of darkness. All of those things are exposed to the light. You have arisen from the dead and Christ is shining on you because you're living in the light.

So when you think about God as light or God as life, understand that the two great properties of that life are truth and righteousness...truth and holiness. And that becomes very important for John because if you say that you are a possessor of the light, that you are in the light, you have received eternal life, then what we should know about you is that you are devoted to the truth and to righteousness. Because that is the essential nature of that eternal life which God imparts. That's back to 1 John 2:9, if you say you're in the light and you hate your brother, you're not in the light, you're in the darkness because the property of that light is righteousness and righteousness doesn't hate, it loves. So when we think about this eternal life, it touches precisely where we live in a practical sense. If you have eternal life, it manifests itself in your devotion to the truth and your commitment to holiness because this is that eternal life which comes from God. That's why John says, if you say God is light, and He's given you His life, then I can say that since the life of God is characterized by truth and righteousness, if He's given His life to you, then your life, the life that God has granted you in faith through Jesus Christ who is that life, if that has happened then the manifestation of that life in you will be in your commitment to truth and righteousness. John is then saying, if I look at your life and the truth isn't there and I look at your life and the righteousness isn't there, then you're lying when you say you have the life because you don't. Because this life of God is a life that cannot be divorced from the truth of God who cannot lie or from the holiness of God, who cannot sin. In Him there is no darkness at all, no death, no deceit and no iniquity. God is absolutely perfect in knowledge and perfect in holiness. That's His life. That's the essence of His life and when He imparts it to you, it is that very life.

Now obviously we fall short of being like God because that wonderful life is incarcerated in our fallen flesh. But the evidences of that life are manifest in our devotion to the truth and holiness. And as God has nothing to do with the darkness, so we long to have nothing to do with the darkness, nothing to do with the darkness of deception, nothing to do with the darkness of transgression. So this is where John's going to take us. It's not what you say. It's not what you claim. It's what we see, the

truth and virtue. And it starts right here. If you say you have the life of God, but you don't have God's attitude toward sin, if you don't have God's truthful and holy hatred of sin, you're lying...you're lying. You don't have His life because His life is consistent with Him. He's the source.

And that brings us to where we need to be. One of the reasons we come to the Lord's table is to confess our sin. If you're reluctant to do that, if you don't see for what it is, if you don't render the same verdict on sin that God does, if you don't *homologeo*, say the same thing about sin that God says, then you don't have the life of God because if the life of God were in you, your inner being would be saying the same thing about sin that God says, as well as saying the same thing about truth that He says. But if you are a true believer and you are a possessor of the light, then you're going to acknowledge your sin, you're going to see it the way God sees it. And eagerly you're going to do what it says, you're going to confess your sin and in the confessing of your sin, you're going to be agreeing with God. And that faithful and righteous God will forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, as we contemplate this marvelously rich truth and the foundation of what John is going to be saying in this epistle, we don't want it merely to be a lesson in biblical theology. We want it to become a point of hard examination. We want to look at our own lives. We say we're in the light. We say the light is in us. But do we manifest the characteristics of that divine life, truth, holiness? That's what John presents to us. It doesn't mean anything to say it if it's not supported by the reality and it starts with us acknowledging the very divine attitude, the attitude of the living God toward sin. That is an indicator that we have the life, when we see our sin as He sees it, as it truly is and long for holiness. And that's why this table is so important, Lord, that we would come and that we would examine ourselves and that we would confess our sins and that we would repent, and receive again that foot washing, that cleansing that we need day by day to demonstrate the reality of our life and to be useful to You. We know that all our sins in Christ are covered and it is our willingness to confess that proves that indeed we have received that eternal life because we demonstrate your attitude toward sin. We thank You that You gave Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to pay in full the penalty for our sin. We long for the day when we enter in to the full light of eternal glory where the longing for pure truth and pure virtue will be forever fulfilled. Until then, it is the pursuit of our hearts to know the truth, to live it obediently in holiness and that involves doing what You've asked us to do, confessing our sins and we bring them before You now, thanking You that provision has been made through Jesus Christ.

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