

Sermon 13th September 2020

If you asked which football team, I support I would confidently tell you it is Manchester United. I would call myself a Man Utd fan or supporter. However, the truth is I have never been to one of their games, in fact I very rarely if ever watch one of their games on television. I can't tell you who their players are or how many any goals a particular player scored or even what they look like. I don't follow the club or the players on social media. I don't own a Man Utd shirt or any piece of memorabilia, but I am a Man Utd supporter, or so I claim. But here is the rub if the lose I will in great detail tell you why they lost and what the manager should have done to win. I can tell you, with absolute certainty what players they should sign during this transfer window and which players they should sell. I am a Gnostic Man Utd supporter; I claim to be a supporter and have many views, opinion and advice for my team, but I really know nothing about the team that I claim to support.

As we move through John's letter, he shows that although the Gnostics claim to know much about God's revelation and to follow His ways, that is have fellowship with Him they do not. As John exposes the falseness of the Gnostic claims he sheds light on similar false beliefs that people have about God today. As John debunks the Gnostic lies, he shows the truth about what it means to be a Christian and how to fellowship or walk with God.

Last week John we saw that John wrote about God's revelation, the "word of life" that he personally had heard, seen and experienced made incarnate in Jesus Christ and which he was appointed to proclaim. Johns says that he proclaimed this "word of life" so that the Believers may have fellowship with each other and with God. John goes on to say that this fellowship of believers with each other and with God would bring him joy.

John distils this revelation of God down to a single great proclamation "God is light; and in Him there is no darkness at all". Light in the Bible is used to represent truth and righteousness whilst darkness is used to represent error or ignorance and unrighteousness or sin. John, in saying that God is light, is emphasizing that God is

completely true and righteousness with absolutely no error or unrighteousness existing within Him. It is God's nature to make Himself known to humanity as it is the property of light to shine. It is amazing although the Gnostics claimed to fellowship with God, they refused to accept God's own revelation of Himself. God's revelation illuminates not only his nature as all together true and righteous God's revelation also illuminates how we are to live, that is walk in the light. God's light, His revelation shows us how to conduct our life, how to walk righteously in the light and thus fellowship with Him. God's light, his revelation also reveals when we fail to be righteous as he is righteous, when we walk in darkness rather than the light and do not fellowship with Him. Gods revelation also show us how to return to the light when we sin and walk in darkness.

John moves on from his great proclamation to show how the Gnostics to failed to live by God's revelation and were walking not in the light but in darkness. John does this by using a repeating pattern of by introducing a Gnostic claim, which was probably a well-known portion of their teachings with, "*if we claim*". John then contradicts the teaching with, "*we lie*" and shows the consequences of believing this lie. Finally, John introduces the truth, God's own revelation with, "*but if we*".

Let's look at verse six and seven. The Gnostics false claim was that they had fellowship with God and maintained that their sinful, unrighteous lives didn't affect this fellowship with God. John contradicts this by stating that this is clearly untrue because they are ignoring God's own revelation about Himself that He is light, that is wholly righteous. How can a wholly righteousness God have anything to do with an unrighteousness sinner? John is clear that if we walk in the light, that is lead righteous lives we can fellowship not only with God but with each other. John moves on to provide comfort by assuring the believers that if they should fall into darkness, that is sin God has made provision for the forgiveness of that sin through the death of His Son Jesus Christ. So, how do we access this forgiveness; how do we walk in the light? By agreeing with God's own revelation that our actions are unrighteous that is confess our sins and do not to ignore them or deny them or pretend they don't matter as the Gnostics were teaching people to do. The modern version of this lie is, "I can follow God and do whatever I please and God isn't bothered". John is clear if you ignore God's own revelation about Himself you cannot walk in the light and certainly

can't claim to fellowship with Him. **2 Corinthians 6: 14** *"For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"*

Moving on to verse seven and eight John deals with an even worse lie. The Gnostics were claiming to be sinless, that is sin did not exist in their nature as an inborn disposition. Unlike the first lie this one wasn't about lying to others about the consequences of sin; it was about deceiving themselves about their very nature. Like the first lie John says that they do not know the truth, that is God's revelation. God's revelation clearly teaches we are at the very core of our being sinners, driven by and desiring to sin. **Psalm 51:15** *"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."* The modern version of this lie would be "We are all good people deep down. It is only our genetics or our upbringing or society or some trauma that makes us get it wrong." John says that if you believe this you are deceiving yourself, that is lying to yourself and God's own revelation is not in you. John, as he did in refuting the first lie, points us to the fact that if we confess, that is agree with God's revelation about ourselves, God can change our sinful nature. God is true to His covenant and His nature that if we confess our sins, He will remove our sinful nature and forgive us our sins. **Ezekiel 36:26** *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you;"* Cleansing and forgiveness issue from the faithfulness and justice of God and are conditional upon confession. Those who claim to be sinless cannot ever receive forgiveness for their sins because they are always putting the blame on something else rather than accepting the blame themselves. If they cannot receive forgiveness, they will never be able to walk in the light and have fellowship with God or other Believers.

So far, the Gnostics have said that sin doesn't break our fellowship with God and each other, a lie told to others. They have lied and said that they are pure, blameless and righteous and free of sin like God and so lied to themselves and became deluded. Now they perpetrate their greatest lie and say they do not and have not sinned, which is in direct opposition to God's own revelation. **Romans 3:23** *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"* The Gnostics' lie is that their revelation is the truth and God's revelation is the lie. The modern version of this lie would be "I know right from wrong and certainly don't need God to tell the difference, if there is any difference at all." This final lie proves God's "word of life", His revelation has no part in the Gnostics' teachings or lives and they walk in darkness and error and unrighteousness.

John changes his formula and starts a new sentence to deal thoroughly with the subject of sin in Believers lives. Firstly, John state that he writing so that they may not sin, that they may have God's revelation His "word of life" and therefor walk in the light and in darkness. John wants to preserve the Believers from falling into these heretics lies. John then goes on to talk about God provision for those Believers who fall into sin. He says that we have an advocate in heaven Jesus Christ, the "word of life " who defends us. The idea here is of a court room where we have a lawyer argues in defence of those guilty of sin. Please note this advocate is for those who have confessed, that is agreed that they are sinners who have sinned and that they are relying on Jesus Christ for their forgiveness. For those who accept Jesus Christ as Saviour at that moment of confession become children of God part of His family, their sin debt paid in full and the stain of their sin wiped clean. When we subsequently stumble into darkness and sin Jesus stands before our heavenly Father on our behalf not arguing we are innocent but rather arguing we are guilty, but the debt has been paid in full by His death on the cross. This is the great provision that God made for us, so that our sins may not be counted against and we can have fellowship with Him and with each other.

God wants to have fellowship with us. In fact, he was so determined to fellowship with us that he sent his revelation, His "word of life" to us incarnate in Jesus Christ so that we may know the way to fellowship with Him. More even than that God removed the great obstacle that blocked fellowship with Him and each other, our sin, by sending His "word of life", Jesus Christ to deal with, pay for and atone for our sin. All we need do to receive this forgiveness and have fellowship with God and each other is to confess our sins.

If we choose not to accept God's revelation and walk in the light, as He is the light, then we can never have fellowship with Him, or each other. There is no other way to come to God that is fellowship with Him, walk in the light other than God's way. The great Gnostic lie that you can come to God on your terms, ignoring God's own revelation.