

# SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY 22.09.24

**PREACHER: PS NATHAN BEAN**

ALIVE IN THE LIGHT

## BECOMING CHRISTLIKE

*BEING, THINKING & DOING*

**Conviction of a Disciple:** As we grow into Christlikeness, we develop a strong heart after God. This happens as we become more deeply rooted and grounded in God's love for us.

### OVERVIEW

John places a strong focus on God's light, reminding us that life as a Christian means receiving His love, walking in the light of that love, and persevering in overcoming darkness.

### ACTION

**Step 1:** Reflect: Where in my life am I tempted to hold on to bitterness or offence, and how is that affecting my ability to walk in God's light?

**Step 2:** Commit: I commit, through prayer, to begin letting go of any doubts or shame I carry about my status as a son or daughter in God's family and to begin receiving his great gift of his love and light.

**Step 3:** Act: What practical steps can I take this week to move toward the light of God's love by forgiving others and embracing God's forgiveness for myself?

# THOUGHT

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 JOHN 2:1-17

Light. Light. Light. If you're paying attention, it won't take long to realise that the theme of "light" is a common theme for John. Throughout his letters in the New Testament, he comes back to this metaphor of light. Why does he do this? Well, to John's early and largely oral audience, this kind of repetition would have served as a verbal highlighter saying "Pay attention! This is really important!"

Also, this repetition serves as a reminder that simply gaining new information isn't the point. The stuff in our heads needs to make its way to our hearts (this is the power of ritual, by the way - over time we are formed by the habits and rhythms we place in our life).

So what is this light John points us to? He makes clear that light is God (1 John 1:5) - he then goes on to also say that God is love (1 John 4:8).

Light and Love. Love and Light. As Christians, the starting point for everything is that we are loved by God and as we learn to receive that great love, we begin to live in and through God's light.

We can't receive this incredible gift of God's love and then turn around and refuse to love those around us. We can be in darkness and move toward the light, or be in the light and move toward the dark, but we can't stay rooted in both. It leads to a disintegrated life, which is what John means when he says anyone who says they are in light but hates another person must still be in darkness. Hate and love can't coexist (1 John 2:9-11).

Obviously, hate is strong language and many of us wouldn't identify that level of emotion in our hearts. But we all have opportunities to carry offences and harbour bitterness. These just as easily keep us from walking in the light of God's love. Bitterness and offence lead us to a far more isolated life. As we build walls up around our hearts or hold people at a distance, our world begins to shrink inward rather than expand outward in cooperation with the growth and movement of God's Kingdom.

If our empathy, compassion, care, and love for others is beginning to fade and our circles seem to be getting smaller and more insular, we may very well be moving toward the darkness without realising it.

Along with hatred, bitterness, and offence toward each other, we can also cease to step into the light of God's love when we don't trust that our failures are truly forgiven and that we are sons or daughters in God's family. In 2:12, John hits the nail on the head. Our sins are forgiven. Full-stop. With his great love for us, his forgiveness is probably the other fundamentally important identity piece to which we can anchor our lives.

**Jesus has placed our sins on his account and we are no longer required to make payment for them.**

This reality is so clear in scripture yet it can be so difficult to believe it. Why is this the case? Simply, it's because there is a real battle going on between the light and dark, and that battle is fighting for our soul.

This means that while our foundation is set and secure in what Christ did for us, we still have work to do. Christ has done his part. Our part then is choosing to persevere (always with the help of the Spirit) in overcoming and moving toward the light and in denying darkness. This work isn't easy, and in fact, suffering is guaranteed. But as we learn to remain in him, abiding in his word, his presence, and in the community of God's people, we begin to see that there is far more to our lives than this world has to offer. As we learn to think and see the world with an eternal perspective, we learn to live and rest in the reality that no matter what our external circumstances look like in a season, God's glorious light always overcomes the darkness.

## DISCUSSION

1. How do we practically "walk in the light" in our daily lives, especially when dealing with offence or bitterness?
2. Why do you think it can be difficult to truly believe in God's forgiveness, and how can we remind each other of this truth?
3. In what ways can we encourage one another to reflect God's light and love, especially when facing struggles or isolation?

## PRAYER

Father,

We are grateful for your unshakable love and light. Help us to recognise the areas of darkness in our hearts, whether through bitterness, offence, or doubt - and in your grace, draw us back to the light of your love and forgiveness for the sake of your Kingdom and for the sake of the world.

Amen.