WEST LOS ANGELES
LIVING WORD
CHRISTIAN CENTER

The Talmid

Talmid תַּלְמִיד a Hebrew word that means "a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is."
Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. **1 John 2:6 (NIV)**

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 4 APRIL 1, 2017

STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15

Dr. Eddie Ildefonso
West Los Angeles Living Word Christian Center
Los Angeles, California

Professor, Covington Theological Seminary
Executive Vice President and Dean of
Covington Theological International Studies

The Assurance of Our Salvation Part 4

Our Security in God

John 17:1-5 (NASB)

1 "Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,
2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.
3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.
4 I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.
5 Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

In our study of this great chapter we have been concentrating in particular upon the great doctrine of salvation as it is revealed and displayed to us in these **five verses**. So far, we have seen that the entire glory for salvation must go to God, and we have been looking at this truth in general. We have seen how the plan of salvation manifests God's great character, his holiness, his mercy, his wisdom, his love, his justice and his power. We have just noted these things, but we know that as we go on and follow what we are told here, and particularize a little more, we shall see the glory of God in a still more wonderful manner.

Now I trust that no one is doubtful as to the importance of this consideration. I hope there is no one who is thinking, 'All this would be fine if one had leisure and nothing else to do. It is quite all right to be considering the glory of God and meditating upon it, but speaking for myself, I find life very difficult and trying. I am hard pressed. All my energies have to go to making a living. I have problems in my own life. I have sickness in the family. I am literally hemmed in by difficulties of all kinds and forms. What has all this to do with me?'

So often men in their ignorance and foolishness have taken up that position. They have regarded this wonderful doctrine of the glory of God as something theoretical and remote. But, my dear friends, there is no greater fallacy than that! The very fact that our Lord offered this prayer proves in and of itself how completely foolish that is.

Why did he offer that prayer, and especially why did he offer it audibly? There is only one answer to that question: he was concerned about these disciples. He had to leave them. He was no longer going to be with them in the flesh, and he reminded his Father, in this prayer, of what he had done for them while he was with them. But now, he continues, **'I am no longer in the world; and *yet* they themselves are in the world, and I come to You…' (verse 11 NASB)**, and he makes known what his desire is for them. His desire for them is that they may come into such a knowledge of their relationship to God that in spite of the fact that he is going to leave them, and in spite of the fact that the world is going to hate and persecute them, they will not be shaken.

There was never anything more practical than this, because the only ultimate strength and hope and consolation that the Christian gospel offers to anybody in this world is just that of understanding the plan of salvation and knowing our relationship to God. And there is no question about this in practice. I have certainly observed during many years in the Christian ministry and as a pastor that, generally speaking, most of the problems and difficulties which people have are due to the fact that they have not taken a firm hold of this great doctrine. As we have seen, it is subjectivity that accounts for our troubles, because we only look to ourselves. But once a man sees himself as part of this great plan, most of his problems are solved almost automatically. So, that is why we are going on to consider some of the detailed aspects of the plan of salvation as it is revealed in these **five verses** in particular.

Having said that the plan of salvation reveals the character of God, I want to put to you, as my next proposition, that salvation is something which has been entirely planned by God, and that this is something which is suggested here on the very surface: [2] **"…You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.[3] This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. [4] I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." (John 17:2-4 NASB)**

That is the first thing, therefore, that we have to take hold of. Salvation, if we may so put it, is entirely the idea of God; it emanates from and has its source and origin in God the Father. Now this is a staggering thought! So often you and I feel we have to placate God because of sin, sin in us, sin in our mind and whole outlook and thought, and sin in the world. We tend to think of God as being opposed and antagonistic to us, and therefore we are always thinking of him as someone we have to appease and placate. We regard God as Someone who is unwilling to be kind and gracious to us and to love us. We think of him as Someone in the far distance in his eternal glory and absolute righteousness who is not well disposed towards us. We feel we have to put forward these great efforts in order to get him to look upon us with favor.

That is a complete fallacy. Salvation has all originated in the mind of God—it is God's own purpose. I go so far as to say that even the Lord Jesus Christ does not have to placate God. Sometimes our hymns can be rather dangerous, and there are certain of them that would lead us to the conclusion that the Son of God has to plead with the Father to have mercy and pity upon us. But that is a gross misunderstanding of the term **'Advocate'**, it is something that is absolutely foreign to biblical teaching. Rather, the Bible teaches that **"…God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.." (2 Corinthians 5:19 NASB); "God so loved the world, that *he gave* his only begotten Son …" (John 3:16 NASB).** It is all from God. So, this idea that the Lord Jesus Christ is at great pains to persuade God the Father to forgive and accept us is utterly unscriptural and entirely false; the source and origin of salvation is the great and eternal heart of God.

But we go from that to this further point. It is not only God's idea, we see here that it has been perfectly planned from the very beginning to the very end. Here we come to something that is the source of the deepest assurance and consolation that any Christian person can ever know in this world of time. What could be more comforting and reassuring than the fact that there is nothing contingent about this salvation, nothing accidental, nothing that needs modification? It is a perfect plan. God has planned it from eternity, before the foundation of the world, it is eternally in the mind of God. There is nothing, therefore, that is accidental about this. It never needs to be modified, or changed or altered in any respect.

Here again is a point at which so many have gone astray. There are those who believe and even teach—you will find it in the case of a certain well-known Bible—that God sent his Son into this world to found and establish a kingdom, but because the Jews rejected him, God had to modify his plan; he had to introduce this way of salvation and so the church was brought into being and ultimately, at some future time, the kingdom will be introduced. They believe that it was all a modifi-

cation of God's original plan. But that, I say, is a theory without the slightest vestige of a basis in Scripture. Scripture, rather, teaches that this plan was worked out before the foundation of the world, before a single man was ever born. And we find this here in these words. **"Father, the hour is come."** What hour? The hour that God had determined. You see that the whole purpose is to be found in that one word—**"*the hour*".** We shall return to this, so for the moment I merely note it in passing, in order to deduce from it this great truth that the plan of God is absolutely complete, and was complete, even before the world was created.

But let us just glance at this time element in order that we may have it firmly in our minds. The plan was there, but it has been revealed in parts, and the great emphasis in the Bible is that everything is always, absolutely on time, with never a second or a moment's delay. Every item has been fixed, everything happens at its appropriate moment. The promise at the beginning was given at the right moment, the flood came at a particular point, and warning was given to mankind: **"…My spirit shall not always strive with man forever…" (Genesis 6:3 NASB).**

He is still doing the same now, but there is an end, there is a limit to it. A time is coming when God will judge the world, and he fixes a time when it is to happen. The call of Abraham was not something accidental, it was done at a precise moment. It was to Abraham that the statement was made that certain things should not happen until the iniquity of the Amorites should be completed. The going down to Egypt was not accidental, it was prophesied, and Abraham was told exactly how long they would be there—430 years—before it ever happened. All these things were perfectly planned because God has his time, God has his exact moment.

But let us come to Moses, to whom the promise was given just at the time when it was necessary, and, again, the promise was given to David in his day. You certainly find this argument employed in the writings of the prophets. They foretell these things with a minuteness and an exactness which to the natural man is quite astonishing, but when we realize that it was God who laid down that great plan in eternity—that everything was determined and everything planned so that things should happen in order for this great design—there is no difficulty at all about it. To anybody who realizes this, it is rather what you would expect, and it is exactly what you find in the Scriptures. And then, of course, there is the well-known verse in Paul's epistle to the Galatians: **"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law" (Galatians 4:4 NASB).**

Now people often ask the question—**'Why didn't Christ come earlier? Why did he come at that particular point?'** Well, though we cannot answer this question in detail, we can say that there are many reasons why that was the right time. God had given His law to His own people. Men always want to claim that they can save themselves, so God gave them time to see and understand that they cannot do so. He gave them a perfect law and said, 'If you keep that you will be saved; you will be righteous in my sight.' He allowed them to try to do that for at least fourteen centuries, but they failed completely. And he also allowed the great succession of Greek philosophers to come and put their thoughts before man. Men said, 'Give us the right idea and we will carry it out.' They tried to, but they failed. The same thing happened with the Romans and their legal system—all that had been tried and failed before God's hour arrived, the hour that had been planned in eternity.

I commend this to you as a fascinating study, apart from the wonderful spiritual truth. As you read through the Old Testament try to put yourself in the position of that ancient race and you will often feel that God had forgotten His own people and His plan of salvation. But every time you begin to think that, and feel that the enemy was triumphant all along the line, God does something again, and you will find that it is not only the exact moment but also the exact thing for the exact moment. It is always the case—and there is nothing that is so comforting as this thought—**"The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad" (Psalm 97:1 NASB). "The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned *above* the cherubim, let the earth shake!" (Psalm 99:1).**

We must get hold of this truth that the whole plan is already made in the mind of God. It is because of this that the Son of God can turn to His Father at this particular point and say, **'Father, the hour is come'**, the hour that we originally agreed about is at hand. He had been preparing His disciples for it, as we see, both in **John 12** and even earlier than that at the wedding in Cana, when he said, **'Mine hour is not yet come.'** The time was all determined, and planned.

But we do not stop at that—thank God for this—for the end is likewise planned and certain. There are many Christian people today who are asking questions. ***Why***

does God allow the church to languish? Why does He allow certain things to happen in the church? Why does He allow this liberal criticism of the Bible that has been going on for a hundred years? Why doesn't He put a stop to all this? Well, that is not God's way, but there is one thing about which we can be certain, and that is that God reigns; and those who may be perplexed about the state of the church here or anywhere else under the sun need not trouble and worry and vex their righteous souls. God reigns! God is still seated there in the heavens and He looks upon the citizens of the earth as grasshoppers.

What He has determined is going to be carried out; the hour and the end of history and the world is determined. God knows it, but nobody else knows the hour, says Christ, no, no man, not even the Son, but the Father only and He knows it. And if you are not comforted and encouraged by that, well I doubt whether you are a Christian at all. The consolation of the glorious biblical affirmations—that neither death nor life nor anything else can separate us from the love of God—rests upon the fact that everything is purposed and planned in the mind of God who sees the end from the beginning and whose power is such that no one can withstand it. He can even take up a man like Pharaoh and use him like clay to bring His own great purpose to pass.

So, let us now, with reverence, look into this plan in a little more detail. I like to take a glimpse into it and I am going to do something now that some of you may regard as strange and odd. I am going to ask you to come with me and look into the Council that was held in eternity, the great Council that was held between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. What was it all about? It was about this very question of salvation, and what happened there was that the Son, the second Person in the blessed Trinity was given an assignment; He was appointed the heir of all things. See Him reminding His Father of that eternal Council here: **"…You gave Him [Son] authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life" (John 17:2 NASB).** Let us look into these things with wondering gaze, with amazement and astonishment and remember, as we are doing it, that we are really in a sense still thinking about ourselves, because that Council was held with respect to us.

So, the first thing we see here is that contemplating what was going to happen to man and to the world, seeing the entry of sin and the fall, this eternal Council decided what should be done about it. And the first great decision was that this matter should be handed over specifically to the Son. It is the purpose of God, says Paul in **Ephesians 1:10 NASB**, that all things should be wound up in Christ, **"with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times…"**—you see the time element again—'He [the Father] might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.' In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ, in that Council, was appointed as the head of mankind. He was made responsible for the world, a kind of head and representative of all the earth and its peoples. He himself told us this at the end after He had risen, when he said to the disciples: **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18 NASB)**.

Now this is one of those crucial principles which we must never fail to understand, one which throws great light upon many an obscure incident in the Old Testament which otherwise cannot be understood. Take, for instance, those appearances to men of the so-called **'Angel of the Lord'**. There can be no question at all but that these are the appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ—what are called the **'theophanies'.** He was interested in the world even then; it had all been given to Him; that was why the world came to be created, it was in Him and through Him and by Him. He is the One in eternity who is deputed to do this particular task. And the record, in a sense, is the record of our Lord carrying out this great task that had thus been given to Him. That is the explanation, too, of John's vision in **Revelation 5**. John is perplexed that no one is big enough or strong enough to open the books—the books of history—then suddenly he sees the Lion of the tribe of Judah stepping forward and the whole of heaven seems to applaud. At last there is One who is big enough and strong enough to take complete charge of history and to break the seals and to open the books. He is the Lord of history, yes, it has already been given to Him, and it belongs to Him.

So, then, we must look at it like this, that everything with respect to this world and to man has been handed over to the Lord Jesus Christ. He has been given this authority, this power over all flesh. He rules and reigns and controls everything that is in the world—the sun, the moon and the stars, the rivers and the streams—that is why He can hold back or send the rain and the thunder storms. He can produce an earthquake. He is controlling everything, for everything has been put into His hands. He is the Governor of the earth. He is in charge of the kingdom and He will remain in charge right on to the end when, according to Paul in **1 Corinthians 15**, He will finally finish the work, and hand the kingdom back to His Father.

But I must not stop at that. God had not only, in that eternal Council, handed over the world and its powers to the Son, He has also given Him a people. I wonder how often you have stopped to consider the **second verse** of this **chapter of John**, and how often you have battled with its tremendous doctrine? I wonder what you have made of it. '**"…You gave Him [Son] authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life" (John 17:2 NASB).** Does He say, **'You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to all flesh'?** No— **that to all whom You have given Him, *He may give eternal life*"**. The universal and the particular are both here in one verse. This is indeed high doctrine, so high that no human can understand it, but so high and glorious, that every man who has the mind of Christ in himself, bows before it in humble reverence, in amazement and in astonishment.

Scriptural teaching is that while God has given to His Son power over all flesh, without any limits whatsoever, He has in particular given Him a special people who are to enjoy the blessings of Christian salvation and eternal life. He has to give eternal life to as many as God the Father has given him, but what I am emphasizing here is that it is God the Father who has given Him these people. He gave Him these particular people who are coming into the church and into eternal life, from the very beginning to the very end. All of them were given to the Son, there in that eternal Council. It is God who chooses them, and, according to **John 6**, it is God who draws them to Him, for unless, Jesus says, God does draw them to Him, they will never come. **"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out"…."For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:37 NASB; John 6:40 NASB).**

This is something that you find running right through these Scriptures. God, from before the creation of the world, had chosen these people. He gives these particular people to His Son, and He says, I give them to you for you to save them for me. **"… All whom You have given Him…" (John 17:2 NASB)**—that was another decision of this great and eternal Council.

But, you see, it is even more particular than that, for God the Father prescribes the particular work the Son has to do in order to save these people. The Lord says, **"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4 NASB)**. I propose to come back to this again and to look at it in more detail, but all I am emphasizing at this point is that the work of saving these individuals was given by the Father to the Son. Thus, we find our Lord constantly saying that He does nothing of Himself. He says in effect, 'I am simply doing the work which the Father has shown Me and given me to do.' It all comes from God the Father, who then sends the Son into the world to do it—to give the Father back the glory that the Son had with Him before He ever sent Him. But it was God the Father who sent Him, for **"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"**—his Son, with power to save. And the purpose of it all, I would remind you again, was that you and I might become the children of God; that we might have this eternal life which is to know God, the only true and living God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent into the world in order to bring us to this blessed knowledge.

My dear friends, are we not guilty of neglecting this glorious doctrine of the glory of God and the plan of salvation in eternity? Evangelical Christians, how often have *you* meditated about these things? Do you not think that we have been guilty of judging particular aspects of salvation instead of regarding this glorious plan? This is why we are so superficial and why we are so shaken in our faith when adversity comes to try us. Our faith is not sufficiently broadly based—we must go back into eternity.

Let me summarize the message by putting it like this—what I deduce from this doctrine is that the eternal God knows us and is interested in us and has a plan for us. If that is not enough for you, then I despair! The astounding thing I find here is that the eternal and absolute God knows me, that He thought of me before the foundation of the world, not only before I was born, but before He even made the world; that this eternal, absolute Being is interested in me, even me, as an individual and as a person, and that I was in His mind when He conceived this amazing plan that includes the incarnation and the cross, and the resurrection and the ascension, and the reign of His Son at His side that is going on now. What a staggering, yes, but what a glorious thought!

The next thing I deduce is that there is therefore nothing uncertain about my acceptance with God, nor about my forgiveness, nor about my sonship. When I realize that I have been brought into God's plan I know that nothing can frustrate this. Now there are many people who talk about the Protestant Reformation, and the

influence it had upon the world. You find that certain statesmen do this. They say you cannot explain the history of England apart from the Protestant Reformation. Neither, they say, can you explain the United States of America apart from these things, because they all had their origin in that Reformation.

But how little do these people really see what it all means and what it really represents, which is that these great truths are absolute and certain. Do you know why the Pilgrim Fathers made that attempt, and succeeded in crossing the Atlantic? What was it that enabled men to do things like that, and to do things which were even more hazardous? It was that they believed in what is called the 'Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints', it was because they had seen themselves in the plan of God which cannot be broken and which cannot fail. It is as absolute as God, Himself; He knows the end as well as the beginning. '**Neither shall any man,**' said Christ, '**pluck them out of my hand.**' It is unthinkable.

So, the next deduction is: if God has done all this for us in Christ, and especially in His death, we can be certain that He will carry on with the work until it is completed. That is Paul's argument: **"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32 NASB). "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10 NASB).**

Let me put it like this: God, who is sufficiently concerned about me to send His Son to die on the cross of Calvary for me, is not going to let me down when any difficulty or temptation faces me. My dear friends, there is *nothing* for you to fear! You belong to One of whom we are told that all power has been given to him over all flesh. You are in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ if you but knew and realized it, and He controls everything. He controls every human being, all the affairs of nature, He is even controlling the devil Himself. All power is given unto Him, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers are subject unto him, so you need never fear! You and I have but to realize that we are in those mighty hands, that that strong arm is engaged on our behalf, that all flesh is under His power, and that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him.

Therefore, when you are troubled and perplexed and harassed, and when all things seem to be against you and you despair, when you pray to Him, before you say a word, just remind yourself of his authority and of his power: '**As you have given him power over all flesh …**' He that has formed you has a power like that, and therefore, being in His safe keeping, why should you fear man or beast or the powers of nature or of hell? Simply trust in Him, He has so loved you that He has died for you, and His power on your behalf is indisputable.

CORAM DEO
(Before the face of God)

Psalms of Prayer and Praise

Psalm 3: Victory in the Face of Defeat
Psalm 4: Evening Prayer for Deliverance

Psalm 3:1-8 (NASB)
1 "O LORD, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me.
2 Many are saying of my soul, "There is no deliverance for him in God." Selah.
3 But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.
4 I was crying to the LORD with my voice, And He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah.
5 I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.
6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me round about.
7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God! For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek; You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.
8 Salvation belongs to the LORD; Your blessing *be* upon Your people! Selah."

Psalm 4:1-8 (NASB)
1 "Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.
2 O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? *How long* will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah.
3 But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him.
4 Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

[5] Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.
[6] Many are saying, "Who will show us *any* good?" Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD!
[7] You have put gladness in my heart, More than when their grain and new wine abound.
[8] In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety."

Psalms 3 & **4** were written by David when he fled from his son Absalom. It is believed that both psalms were composed on the same day, one in the morning and the other in the evening. The words are of one who had often sought and found help from God.

David needed protection and deliverance from his enemies. A nation was against him. Absalom, his own son, was heading the rebellion, and his most trusted counselor had joined with Absalom. David knew the odds were overwhelmingly against him. He sought help that only God could give.

David's words spell out the dangers: **"O LORD, how my adversaries have increased!"; "Many are rising up against me."; "Many are saying of my soul." "Ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me round about."** Yet in spite of this, he is not crushed or despondent. There is one Friend who cannot fail him. In Him David has confidence. This lifts him above his circumstances and fears. God's divine protection was a reality. Surrounded by enemies, God was his shield and his glory.

He knew that the Lord that could hear him from ***"His holy mountain"*** **(verse 4)**, could still lift up the light of His countenance upon him and put gladness in his heart. Protected by the Lord, he lay down and slept in safety. Enemies may taunt **(verse 2)**, and friends might fail, but the victory is God's **(verses 7–8)**.

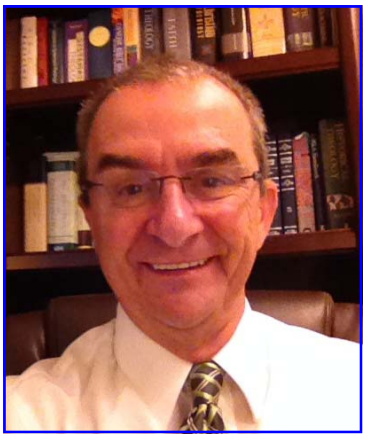
The **second** and **fourth verses** of **Psalm 3** close with the word **"Selah."** This term is used seventy-three times in the Psalms and three times in the book of Habakkuk. It generally indicates a rest or a pause. It also suggests that the reader reflect on what has been read.

Both psalms contain a phrase about sleeping peacefully **(Psalm 3:5** and **Psalm 4:8)**. What a wonderful picture of God's peace descending on a troubled soul enabling one to sleep even in times of trouble. What wonderful trust on the part of the author to believe that God is in control. Hear God saying, "Rest. Trust me. Worry and sleeplessness will do no good. Believe that I am working on your behalf." **Psalm 121:4 NASB** says, **"*Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep.*"**

There is a great sense of dependence on God's work even when situations do not seem favorable. God does not forget His own. He does not remove Himself in difficult situations. We simply must see with the eyes of faith as the psalmist does. Men say one thing, God often says just the opposite. Our responsibility is to trust, not fret; to do the right thing and depend on God **(Psalm 4:5)**.

Psalm 4:5 (NASB)
[5] "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD."

Continued in next edition...



Pastor C. Gary Fleetwood
Chime Bell Baptist Church
Windsor, South Carolina

Professor, Covington Theological Seminary
Aiken, South Carolina Extension
Dean, Covington Theological Seminary
Country of Romania

1 John 1- Overview

Part 2

We want to begin to look at several of the key words and key phrases in this chapter. The key words and the key phrases are what thrust the content into a certain direction. It is important to know where John is headed, and it is obvious that he creates his theological direction for us in **1 John 1**. Everything else in this letter is an extension and further explanation of what John states in **1 John 1**. The major contrast that John presents is the difference between "**walking in darkness**" and "**walking in the light**". In v5, he says "**this is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you…**" This is the "**message**", or the "*angelia*". This is a very rare Greek word used only here in a variant form and in **1 John 3:11** which says,

> 1Jn 3:11 **For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,**

There are other Greek words for "**message**", but **1 John** has the only use of this noun in the New Testament, and that seems to add a quality of significance to its meaning. This is something incredibly unique that John is communicating here. He is sharing something with us about the very nature of God - that "**God is light and in Him is no darkness at all**". This is the message of **1 John** - "**God is light**", and it is what will color the entire spiritual landscape of this remarkable letter. In 1 John 1, John presents two crucial doctrinal tests to determine what is genuine. These are very critical tests and they cannot be taken lightly. The first test deals with having an accurate belief in the nature of God (v5), and the second test deals with an accurate belief in the certainty of sin (v6-10).

So, here are the key things that we have to discern. (1) What does it mean to "**walk**" – either in "**light**" or in "**darkness**"? (2) What is John referring to when he uses the word "**light**"? (3) What is John referring to when he uses the word "**darkness**"? Everything will revolve around these kind of strategic words and phrases.

WALK: In **1 John**, the word "**walk**" is only used in **1 John 1:6 and 7**, and then no more in the rest of the letter. So, someone is going to ask "why" is this word so important? Well, the reason is because the word "**walk**" becomes a description of everything else that follows in 1 John. I.e., we are either "**walking in the light**" or "**walking in darkness**" and all of **1 John** is a kind of commentary on those phrases, on those contrasts. For John, and rightfully so, there is no middle of the road. For John, these truths are absolutes and there is no marginal area. We live in a very relativistic culture where people discard absolutes, and especially the absolutes of Scripture. Their reasoning is that all things are relative for the individual and what they like and what they want for their life. I.e., if it is right for you, then it is okay. Well, that kind of reasoning and logic can only take a person so far. What if I tell you that I believe that it is okay for me to do something that is harmful to you or to your property – and I am sincere in what I believe? Maybe I sincerely believe that it is perfectly okay for me to steal items from your house when I come to visit you. Well, at that point what I believe and what you believe will clash. Why? It is because you do not believe that I have the right to harm you or your property. Our entire culture is based on personal freedom to do what we want to do and to live as we want to live, but the moment that someone infringes on our personal freedoms and preferences, then we have a problem. That is why we have laws. It is because we do not really believe that anyone can do anything they please just because they sincerely believe that they have the right to do it. Only a fool would believe that, so we have laws, or in our terminology this morning, we have absolutes. For John, all of these issues that he will address are absolutes, and I can assure you that some of them may make you feel like John is trespassing on

your personal freedoms and rights – and that is his intent. The issue of either "**walking in the light**" or "**walking in darkness**" is an absolute for John. This is the way that John is going to describe the Christian life – "**walking in the light**", and the way that he is going to describe those who are lost - "**walking in darkness**". That is the contrast that John is going to develop in the rest of the letter. This "**light/darkness**" contrast is basic to biblical theology. 2 Corinthians 4:6 highlights this when it says,

> 2Co 4:6 **For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

In John 8:12, it declares,

> Jn 8:12 **Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."**

So, what does the word "**walk**" mean? Well, it is a very important Greek word in the New Testament – "*peripateo*". The figurative meaning of the word refers to how a person lives and how they conduct their life. It refers to how someone behaves and how they act. Some of the lexicons talk about it as how someone "regulates" and "controls" their life. I like that connotation. I do not enjoy when things are out of control. I like the fact that when I pay for a gallon of gas, that there is a regulator on the pump to ensure that I get a gallon of gas for what it says that it costs. Colossians 2:6 in the Amplified Bible emphasizes this aspect of the meaning when it says,

> Col 2:6 **As you have therefore received Christ, [even] Jesus the Lord, [so] walk (regulate your lives and conduct yourselves) in union with *and* conformity to Him.**

Colossians 2:6 in the NKJV simply says,

> Col 2:6 **As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,**

To "**walk in Him**" simply means to live your life the way that Christ lived His.

Obviously, "**walking in the light**" reflects a godly lifestyle, and "**walking in darkness**" reflects a sinful lifestyle. That is the obvious intent of the word in this passage. It simply means to live, to act, and to behave in a certain way – good or evil. Our "**walk**" reflects what we believe and what is important and meaningful to us. Speaking of a godly lifestyle, Ephesians 5:8 says,

> Eph 5:8 **For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.**

Galatians 5:16 says,

> Gal 5:16 **I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

Romans 6:4 encourages us to "**walk in newness of life**". Colossians 1:10 says,

> Col 1:10 **that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him,* being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;**

Obviously, there are many other references in the New Testament to this idea of walking and living in such a way that our life reflects God and brings glory to Him, but suffice it to say that one of the primary objectives of 1 John is to get us to transparently and sincerely evaluate our "**walk**" before God and before others.

Secondly, we want to look at the word "**light**". We are to "**walk in the light**" (v7) because "**God is light**" (v5). In 1 John 1:5 the word "**light**" represents what God is like, or His nature, and our understanding of the very essence of His nature is foundational to the rest of the letter. It includes the idea of His moral goodness, purity, and holiness. It is important to notice that the word "**light**" in the Greek text is without the article. The rule of Greek grammar is that the absence of the definite article shows quality, nature, or essence. So what John is saying is that "**God as to His nature, essence, andn character, is light**." The very nature of God is ethical, moral, and spiritual. There is "**no darkness in Him**". There is not one single thing in God that is ethically, morally, or spiritually deviant, improper, illicit, inappropriate, dishonest, or indecent. Whatever we read in God's Word is right and accurate and unchanging simply because that is the nature of God Himself. The Bible is clear that because of the nature of God He cannot lie. He cannot and will not communicate something to us that is not true.

The Scriptures reveal two very important fundamental principles that flow from this foundational truth that "**God is light**".

PRINCIPLE ONE: "**Light**" represents the truth of God as embodied in His Word. The light that God gives through His Word and the life that God gives through His word are inseparable from the truth.

PRINCIPLE TWO: "**Light**" is linked to both virtue and moral conduct. That is why John uses the word "**walk**" in 1 John 1:6-7 to emphasize the issue of behavior as being representative of genuine salvation. **We cannot separate belief and behavior**. For instance, 1 John 2:9-11 emphasizes this when it says,

> 1Jn 2:9 **He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. 10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.**

If either truth or righteousness (simply doing what is right) are consistently **missing** in a person's life, that person, no matter what they may say or claim, does not possess eternal life. Obviously, all believers no matter their spiritual maturity fall short in different areas of their life. In fact, that is the clear message of 1 John 1:7 and 9 – that we do have sin. This is the second test that we talked about earlier that we have an accurate understanding of the certainty and inevitability of sin in our lives. The important truth to understand, however, is that even though every genuine believer will sin, they will still manifest a genuine desire for continual striving towards both truth and righteousness in their life. They understand sin and they understand righteousness, and they are consistently gravitating towards righteousness in their life.

Because the nature of God is "**light**", we as His children are to reflect Him in our life by walking in that same light, in that same ethical, moral, and spiritual nature. (v7). John 3:19-21 is very clear in what it delineates to us,

> Jn 3:19 **And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."**

This is man's condemnation – God gave them His light and they both loved and chose darkness over His light. They practiced evil and would not "**come to the light**". God's light reveals and exposes us for what we are. Remember that because God is light there is nothing that He can say that is wrong. So, when we come to God's Word it exposes us and reveals those things about our life that are wrong and ungodly – and we resist that light. The best thing that any of us can do is to embrace God's light, to embrace God's truth, and to embrace God's ways. The best thing that we can do is to allow God's Word to expose those areas of our life that are out of alignment with God's nature. Yet we constantly resist God's light and the conviction that it brings. That is why John deals in v6, 8, and 10 with those who "**walk in darkness**", with those in whom "**the truth is not in them**", and in those in whom "**the Word is not in them**". God says that they are "**deceived**" and "**make Him a liar**". No matter who we are, no matter what we have done, and no matter what we may believe about life and eternity and all of those kinds of things, it is absolutely imperative that we "**come to the light**" (John 3:20). Ephesians 5:8 tells us,

> Eph 5:8 **For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light**

What the "**light/darkness**" contrast is consistently telling us is that God expects each of us to be fundamentally different from the world. Romans 13:12-14 says,

> Ro 13:12 **The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.**

1 Peter 2:9 declares,

> 1Pe 2:9 **But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**

Of all of the New Testament writers, John uses the word "**light**" more than anyone else. In fact, the word "**light**" is found 23 times in the first 12 chapters of John's gospel. Jesus is called the "**light of men**", the "**light of the world**", and the "**true light**". So, here in 1 John 1, John is saying that a Christian cannot claim to have fellowship with God while living in "**darkness**", or sin. It is not possible.

We want to look at the word "**darkness**", because it is the contrast to "**light**" that John is drawing for us in this

entire letter. The word "**darkness**" metaphorically refers to a spiritual or moral "**darkness**" that is characteristic of sin. It is the natural state and condition of moral and spiritual depravity. Dr. Renn says that it indicates a moral "**darkness**" that grips the heart and mind of an unbeliever. It is their natural state of spiritual hostility against and enmity with God. It is a word that symbolizes evil, sin, wickedness, iniquity, corruption, and depravity. "**Darkness**" describes both the state and works of a person. It symbolizes evil and sin, everything that life should not be and everything that a person should not do. That is what John is referring to when he uses the word "**darkness**". In **Colossians 3:5-9**, Paul tells us exactly what it means to "**walk in darkness**" when he says,

> Col 3:5 **Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which <u>you yourselves once walked when you lived in them</u>. 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,**

The word "**darkness**" also refers to the influence and power of Satan in a person's life. A lost person is under the power of Satan and is guilty of sin. His sins are not forgiven. In **Acts 26:18** Paul is rehearsing what God told him when He called him to Himself. He told him that He was going to send him to the Gentiles,

> Ac 26:18 **to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'**

Everywhere we go in the Scriptures we are confronted with this issue of darkness and sin. It is as much a part of the New Testament as is the holiness of God. One of the verses that epitomizes the problem with sin is found in **Luke 11:35** which says,

> Lk 11:35 **Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness.**

There is this overwhelming propensity in man to refuse to believe the light and the truth that God has given to him. Unwilling to be confronted by the light, men continue to think that they know and understand things about God and eternity for which they have no understanding whatsoever. The light that they have is actually darkness, and eventually it will lead them into eternal darkness. **John 1:5** reiterates this when it says,

> Jn 1:5 **And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**

Ephesians 6:12 speaking of what takes place in the unseen spiritual world around us, says,

> Eph 6:12 **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the <u>rulers of the darkness</u> of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places.***

Colossians 1:13 declares that God has delivered us from the darkness when it says,

> Col 1:13 **He has delivered us from the <u>power of darkness</u> and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love,**

Now, all we are doing is trying to set up this contrast between "**light**" and "**darkness**". It will continue to be the theme all the way throughout this letter – spiritual "**light**" in contrast to spiritual "**darkness**". Here is what I want you to take away from this – the contrasts are what John uses to create the "spiritual tests" that we are all going to have to take. These contrasts will test us; they will test our faith in God's word vs. our own ideas and assumptions. They will test our resolve to persevere in the things of God. They will test our commitment to remain faithful and true to the Word of God in the face of the rampage of false assumptions about eternal life that are so prevalent in the modern church age. So, we have to take these tests very seriously, not only for ourselves, but also for those that we love and care about.

<u>ENDNOTES</u>

[1]MacArthur, 22.
[2]Mounce, 409.
[3]Precept, Walk, electronic page.
[4]Renn, 1023.
[5]Practical, Walk, electronic page.
[6]Zodhiates, 1462-1463.
[7]Wuest, 100.
[8]MacArthur, 24-25.
[9]MacArthur, 25.
[10]Vine, 260.
[11]Renn, 238-239.
[12]Practical, Darkness, electronic page.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1-3 John.* Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2007.

Mounce, William D. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006.

"Precept Austin." *Precept Austin.* n.d. http://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_110.htm#walk.

Renn, Stephen D., ed. *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words.* Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005.

Vine, W.E. *The Expanded Vine's: Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.* A Special Edition. Edited by John R. Kohlenberger III. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1984.

WORDsearch. *Practical Word Studies in the New Testament.* Edition 4. Prod. Alpha-Omega Ministries. Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1998.

Wuest, Kenneth S. *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament.* Vols. 2, The Exegesis of 1 John. 3 vols. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1973.

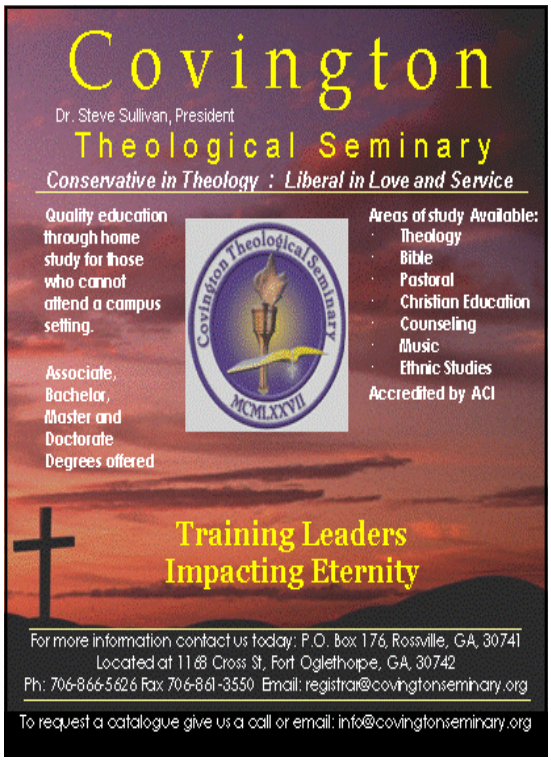
Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*. Revised Edition, 1993. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1992.

The Talmid is published by:

West Los Angeles
Living Word Christian Center

6520 Arizona Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90045 USA
(310) 645-2522 or (310) 665-0137

Email: admin@wlalwcc.org
Web Site: www.wlalwcc.org



International Extension Schools

The North Andros Bible Institute
Barbados, Bahamas
Covington Theological Seminary of Brazil
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Covington Theological Seminary of Chile
Talagante Santiago, Chile
The Ghana Baptist Institute & Bible College
Accra, Ghana
Covington Theological Seminary of Honduras
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Covington Theological Seminary of Gudiwada
Krishna-Andhrapradesh, India
The International Extension of Indonesia
Jakarta, Indonesia
Covington Theological Seminary of Indonesia
Papua, Indonesia
Blue Mountain Baptist Bible College
Ogbomosho, Oyo State, Nigeria
Covington Theological Seminary of Pakistan
Lahore, Pakistan
Covington Theological Seminary of the Philippines
Bohol, Philippines
Covington Theological Seminary of Romania
Susani, Romania
Covington Theological Seminary of South Africa
Johannesburg, South Africa
Covington Theological Seminary of Zimbabwe
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe