

1 John 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

Analysis

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. John introduces the first of several conditional statements testing claims to know God. "If we say" addresses professions of faith that may be false. The contrast is stark: claiming fellowship with God (who is light) while "walking in darkness" is an impossibility—to claim otherwise is to lie.

"Walk" (peripatōmen, περιπατῶμεν) indicates lifestyle and habitual practice, not occasional stumbling. The present tense emphasizes ongoing conduct. Darkness represents sin, error, and moral blindness. "We lie" (pseudometha, ψευδόμεθα) is straightforward—false profession of faith while living in sin is deception.

"Do not the truth" is a Hebraic expression meaning to practice truth, to live according to reality. This verse demolishes antinomianism and exposes mere profession without transformation. Genuine fellowship with God produces changed life—not perfection, but fundamental redirection from darkness to light.

Historical Context

The Gnostic teachers claimed superior spiritual knowledge and fellowship with God while living immorally. They divorced spiritual status from ethical behavior, arguing that the spirit's enlightenment was unaffected by the body's actions. Some practiced strict asceticism, others libertinism—but both denied that moral conduct evidenced true knowledge of God.

This heresy persists throughout church history. Medieval indulgences suggested salvation could be purchased regardless of lifestyle. Antinomian movements claimed grace made obedience irrelevant. Modern "easy believism" sometimes presents salvation as mental assent without life transformation.

John's test is simple and devastating: those who walk in darkness, regardless of their claims, do not have fellowship with the God who is light.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Are there areas of your life where you're claiming fellowship with God while walking in darkness?
2. How can you distinguish between struggling against sin and walking in darkness?
3. What would it look like for your church to lovingly but firmly apply this test of genuine faith?

Interlinear Text

Ἐὰν	εἵπωμεν	ὅτι	κοινωνίαν	ἔχομεν	μετ'	αὐτοῦ	καὶ	ἐν
If	we say	that	fellowship	we have	with	him	and	in
G1437	G2036	G3754	G2842	G2192	G3326	G846	G2532	G1722
τῷ	σκότει	περιπατῶμεν	ψευδόμεθα	καὶ	οὐ	ποιοῦμεν		
G3588	darkness	walk	we lie	and	not	do		
	G4655	G4043	G5574	G2532	G3756	G4160		
τὴν	ἀλήθειαν·							
G3588	the truth							
	G225							

Additional Cross-References

1 John 4:20 (Parallel theme): If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

1 John 2:4 (Truth): He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Proverbs 2:13 (Darkness): Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;

1 John 1:10 (Parallel theme): If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

John 8:12 (Darkness): Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 12:35 (Darkness): Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

James 2:14 (Parallel theme): What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

John 12:46 (Darkness): I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

1 John 1:3 (Parallel theme): That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

John 11:10 (Parallel theme): But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

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