

Light that Encourages and Exposes

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[0 : 00] Well, those are the notices, so we come to our Bible reading, so please do grab a Bible. Turn towards the end of the New Testament to 1 John, 1 John.

And this evening, Josh will be preaching to us, beginning a series on this epistle, this letter. And tonight we're just going to be having a bit of an introduction to the letter.

And we're going to be thinking specifically about the prologue, which is really 1 verses 1 to 5. So we're going to read there, and then we're going to have a second reading from chapter 2.

But let's have our first reading, 1 John, chapter 1, beginning at verse 1. So hear the word of the Lord. The Apostle John says, That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and touched with our hands concerning the word of life, the life was made manifest, and we have seen it and testified to it and proclaimed to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

That which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us. And indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

[1 : 35] And we are writing these things so that our, or it could also be translated, your joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaimed to you, that God is light, and in Him there's no darkness at all.

And then please do flick over to chapter 2, to verse 12 to 14. I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for His name's sake.

I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

[2 : 52] Well, amen, and may God bless to us this, His Word. Do turn once again in your Bibles to 1 John.

How many times in the Christian life have you been left wondering, am I the real deal? How many times have you had other Christians leave you floundering and questioning as to whether you really are a Christian?

Because they've ascended to some new spiritual height that is alien to you. It's sadly all too common. I know of many people who've been lured down such a path with things like, yes, it's great that you believe these things and that what your church teaches is good on some things, but have you yet discovered this wonderful thing that I can show you that will take you further up and further in to spiritual life?

Let us share with you how to really know abundant fellowship with the Spirit of God Himself. Let me give you the key to sinless life. Let me show you the way to really know and understand the heart of the Christian faith.

Here, follow me and you'll experience victory and flourishing as a Christian as you've never known it before. That's the kind of backdrop that is behind John's first letter.

[4 : 25] A number have gone out from this church departing from gospel churches and from gospel people and from the gospel message. Now that kind of departure is rarely brazen, is it?

I've found a cult. I'm off. You don't ever hear that, do you? No, the reality is that those who really shake us, those who depart and really unsettle our faith are not those who explicitly and obviously depart from Orthodox Christianity.

Now when someone leaves and departs by openly rejecting the Lord Jesus, well of course we're saddened and concerned. But that peels in comparison with those who depart claiming that they've gone on to bigger and better things spiritually.

Because it leaves us wondering, am I missing out? They've found a truly Christian church. They've found a truly faithful, grace-filled community.

They've moved on to a purer church. The holy reformed one. Or spiritual one. Or biblical one. Or whatever the adjective is.

[5 : 38] Now it's very common in the New Testament letters that we aren't given exactly what heresy is being believed by a church. There isn't a title given or neat and tidy parameters of exactly the beliefs that have strayed.

And that's helpful for us because the specific heresies of the first century are unlikely to play out identically in the 21st century.

But the tendencies and the fruit of these things are almost certainly present. For example, I'm not sure that anybody today is likely to describe themselves as a Gnostic.

Have you ever met one of them? But just think of all those times where you have been led to feel like you're on a lower spiritual plane than someone else. Well, that's a fruit in keeping with that old heresy.

And so helpfully, what we have in God's gracious revelation isn't a textbook where you consult a specific letter for corresponding heresies. No, it's much more realistic than that.

[6 : 40] Much warmer. Much more helpful. Because it means we can't disregard any of the letters. John drips in throughout this letter the kinds of claims and the language that the departed use.

Language that reveals their departure as more than just a rejection of Jesus, but a departure that sets up an alternative Christ. And so the language the departed use is present throughout the letter. And we'll focus next week on some of those significant claims. But for now, John makes clear that those who left really are the departed. Not just physically departing from the local church that John is writing to, but they've also departed theologically and relationally and morally from the apostolic gospel and from the Godhead.

The key departure is not physical, leaving this local church. the key departure is departing from the apostolic gospel, claiming deeper and superior spiritual experience that leaves behind the apostles. So look at chapter 2, verses 18 and 19. John says, Children, it is the last hour and as you have heard that Antichrist is coming, soon now many Antichrists have come.

[8 : 10] Therefore, we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us. For, if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.

Those who departed are not of us. They are not of the apostles. They've departed, yes, from a gospel church, but from the gospel itself.

And notice the language used of them. For the avoidance of doubt, John says that those who claim greater spirituality, greater victory, greater purity and greater knowledge than as ours through the apostolic gospel, he says, they are Antichrists.

We didn't be afraid of such a phrase. John uses it and he isn't meaning a horned red creature with a trident and a tail. He uses it of those who are opponents of Christ.

but more than that, those who set up a competitor to Christ. When anyone leads us to believe that what we have in Christ is lacking, that it's not enough, that they can fill up what is lacking, or that they can lead us on to fuller joy, then they're not just against Christ, but they're setting themselves up as an alternative to him.

[9 : 36] Those who are truly of the apostles continue with the apostles. And so that is really the word for this letter. Continue or abide or remain.

It's the same Greek word for all three of those and it comes up again and again in this letter, most often translated in the ESV as abide. And so John, throughout this letter, is doing two things side by side.

First, he exposes. He's making plain what is unclear about the departed and there is a positive in them having physically left because that in turn helps them to make clear the real departure.

So John is exposing, but he's also encouraging. He's making plain what may be unclear about those who remain. He exposes, making plain what's unclear about the departed and he encourages making plain what may be unclear about those who remain.

And the encouragement that John has throughout this letter is to continue, to abide, to remain in what you are because you have Christ and they are Antichrist.

[10:51] And so the tune of this letter is overwhelmingly encouragement. It's a tune of encouragement and reassurance. Throughout 1 John, we have somewhere between 11 and 13 purpose statements.

That's where the writer tells us why he's writing. And common to all of those is either exposing the risk that the departed pose or with words of encouragement reassuring those who remain.

That's what the writer is doing. Exposing and encouraging. Now, one of the best known readings of 1 John speaks of three tests.

That it's a letter about the belief test, the love test and the obedience test. Belief, about believing in Jesus as the Christ. Love, which is love for the brothers.

And obedience, which is obeying God's commands as law. And there's lots of language throughout the letter that relates to those things. But I'm not convinced that those things are really all that separate.

[11:59] As if it's three tests. They can't be separate, can they? Because the reality is that believing in Jesus means obeying him as Lord and it's hard to take his word or his law seriously in any way whatsoever without having real and genuine love for other Christians.

Or as John puts it himself in chapter three, this is his commandment that we believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ and love one another just as he has commanded us.

That is what is to be continued in. I'd also want, if you're familiar with that reading, I'd want to just be careful with the use of the word test, because the tune of this letter is one of reassurance.

It's not examination, it's reassurance. John isn't prompting questions to those who've remained of, are you these things? Do you have fellowship with God?

Do you have eternal life? No. He's reassuring a gospel church who've been rocked by the departure of those who look superior and who claim to be superior, the departure of those who were once relationally embedded amongst this church, friends, family, elders, growth group leaders.

[13:17] He's reassuring them in the face of that. He isn't asking, are you these things? He's reassuring this church that they have fellowship with God, that they have eternal life and myriads of other wonderful things, even if it doesn't look or feel like it.

And so John encourages this church to continue in all that they have to abide in what is wonderfully yours in Christ. Now, one final thing to point out before we turn to the prologue of this letter, and that is the structure of 1 John.

1 John is structured somewhat differently from many of the other letters in the New Testament.

We've not long ago finished 1 Corinthians, and it's a very linear book, very clear sections that hold together and with ideas that flow logically from one to another.

1 John is more complex in its structure. It's not really a very linear letter. And there's been great disagreement on just how it is structured. Some follow the three tests and say that there are cycles of those tests around belief and love and obedience.

Others say that there are two main sections that focus on light and love. which follow after the two great statements that God is light and God is love. I've been greatly helped by an Australian scholar called Matthew Jensen, who is very compelling in how he sees this book fit together, and I'd recommend his writings on this.

[14:51] He's convinced me of the structure, and Andy Gamble's been a great help too. And so let me point out a few things that I think will help us with how this letter fits together.

I think there are two main parts to the letter, an extended introduction, which is from chapter 1, verse 1, to chapter 2, verse 11. We're going to look at the introduction this week and next week.

Then there's the main part of the letter, which is chapter 2, verse 15, until the end. And between the two comes a kind of hinge, those verses we read in chapter 2, verses 12 to 14.

Turn over to those verses now. In chapter 2, verse 12 to 14, we have six of the purpose statements here, and they come in two sets of three phrases, addressed to the little children, which is how John refers to the church generally, then to the fathers, and then to the young men, and the same again, little children, fathers, young men.

And these purpose statements are words of great reassurance, but notice the change from the first set of three to the second set of three. The first set of three sayings in verse 12 and 13 all begin, I am writing to you.

[16:17] They're all in the present tense. Whereas look at the second set of three. They're all in what is called the eroist tense. which in Greek is the simple past tense.

They're all I write to you. Now the default tense in Greek writing would be this eroist simple past tense. To use a different one would be a very deliberate choice.

And so I think John is marking some kind of transition here in the letter. Because when we look across the whole letter, up until chapter two, verse 13, John uses exclusively the present tense when he talks out why he is writing.

And then from the end of verse 13, he speaks exclusively about why he is writing in this eroist tense. Two halves to the book. And then we have these verses in the middle in which we're introduced to the ideas that come up throughout the rest of the letter.

Now, John introduces a series of claims which we will see next week. But we can glance at them now in chapter one, verse six.

[17:29] The first one, if we say we have fellowship, that's one of their great claims of fellowship. Chapter one, verse eight. And chapter one, verse ten, claims about not having sin.

Some more of their claims in chapter two, verse four. They knew God in a particular way. Again, chapter two, verse six.

Whoever says he abides in him, close fellowship with him. Chapter two, verse nine. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother. These are some of the great claims that the departed are making.

Greater fellowship, greater purity, greater knowledge, greater spirituality. And the reality of these claims are then explored in the main part of the letter.

I think we can take it that these claims, which we'll look at next week, are the kinds of things that the departed were saying, lording over the genuine gospel church and the people they left behind.

[18:33] But it's worth us noticing that in the introduction, the claims are less definite. The language is a bit more open and indirect. All those claims that I pointed you towards, the language is the language of if.

It's the language of possibilities. Whoever, if. Whereas in the main part of the letter, John talks a lot more forcefully with imperatives and commands.

So, chapter 2, verse 15, do not love the world. 4, verse 1, do not believe every spirit.

Or 4, verse 7, love one another. The language is a lot more direct than in the introduction. And in the introduction, the separation between the departed and those who remain is cast in the language of light and darkness.

So, chapter 1, verse 5, God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. And the great reassurance of the first part is in chapter 2, verse 8.

[19:44] The darkness is passing away. And in the second part of the letter, the separation between the departed and those who remain is cast in the language of being marked by the love of God or by belonging to the world.

So, chapter 4, verse 8, anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. And the great reassurance of the second part, chapter 2, verse 17, the world is passing away.

And so, the language of light and darkness is only used in the introduction, and the language of the world is used once in the introduction, and then 22 times in the second part.

So, that's why I think it's structured in two parts, and we're going to focus now and next week on this first part. So, first, to light and darkness we turn.

Back to chapter 1, verses 1 to 5. John begins his letter with a prologue that has echoes of how he begins his gospel. And John begins by being clear about the very heart of the gospel, the true thing, the reality.

[21:02] And that's significant. When faced with all kinds of limitations, and opposing and contrasting pictures of spiritual flourishing, and the faithful and joyful Christian life, the key for us isn't to intimately know all the different errors.

The key for us is to know the real thing deeply and assuredly. That's always the way to spot counterfeits, isn't it? To be masters of the real thing.

Our mission partner in India described their ministry, which contends with all kinds of imitations of Christianity, he described it to me saying, the key to exposing the counterfeits is to flood the market with the real thing.

And so John wants us to see two key things from these opening five verses about the real thing. First, verses one to two, it has a firm foundation. It has a firm foundation, verses one and two. nothing in this world can take the weight of our longings and our hopes and faith aside from the apostolic gospel.

[22 : 13] We can take great reassurance from the reality of Jesus' incarnation, his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection and ascension that were witnessed by and entrusted to the apostles.

Now, it's hard to be totally sure what John is referring to in verse one when he uses the phrase concerning the word of life. Commentators disagree between the two possibilities.

Is it Jesus? Is he the word of life, the word made of flesh, the word of John one, who was from the beginning? Or is the word of life the word of the gospel, which has at its heart the revelation of the Lord Jesus who brings life?

We can't actually be certain. There are arguments for both. The language of verse one doesn't seem to be in reference to a person. John says that which was from the beginning, not he who was from the beginning.

The idea that's picked up in verse two isn't the word, but the life. But equally, it's unusual language to talk about touching the word of the gospel.

[23 : 23] And the truth is, the significant events of Jesus' time on earth are what are the crux of verses one and two. I think the ambiguity is not unhelpful because we can, I think, take it as referring to both the word of the gospel and to the living word, the Lord Jesus.

And so on to what is really key in these verses. The key truth that John wants us to grasp is that the apostles were the eyewitnesses to Jesus Christ.

Notice verse one, we have heard, we have seen, we have looked upon and we have touched.

Verse two, we have seen the life that was made manifest and we testify to it.

We proclaim to you the eternal life which was made manifest to us. The key truth here is that the apostles' collective voice is the voice of authority when it comes to Jesus and to true spirituality.

From the beginning of the gospel age, the apostles were the genuine and real custodians of the truth about Jesus. And so John begins this letter with a robust reassurance.

[24 : 40] He begins by making plain the real foundations that gospel churches and gospel people have. If we want the key to spirituality, if we want the key to overcoming evil, if we want the key to purity in this world, if we want the key to truth, wisdom and knowledge, then there is only one place to look and only one place to go.

It is to those who have heard, seen, looked upon and touched the one who is the way, the truth and the life. Beware of anyone who makes bold claims and pronouncements about the new thing that God's spirit is doing in this contemporary world, if it flies in the face of the revelation once for all entrusted to the apostles.

Any claim to the new and superior path to life and flourishing that leaves behind the apostolic gospel is a foundationless claim. But look at the great reassurance there is here in verse one. These are claims with the firmest of foundations. John begins that which was from the beginning. Well, what was from the beginning?

He picks that language up in chapter 2 as we read, chapter 2 verse 13. I am writing to you fathers because you know him who is from the beginning.

[26 : 07] Chapter 2 verse 14. I write to you fathers because you know him who is from the beginning. Knowing him who is from the beginning is the heart of the heart of this letter.

That same phrase used in both triplets right in the middle of each of them. Knowing him who is from the beginning, chapter 2 verse 12, means that your sins are forgiven.

It means chapter 2 verse 13, it means overcoming the evil one. chapter 2 verse 14, it means not just knowing Jesus, but knowing the father too.

And it means that the word of God abides within you and that you've overcome the evil one. The gospel of the Lord Jesus as passed on by the apostles is the authentic good news that promises eternal life.

And verse 1, the apostles have heard and seen. back in Acts chapter 4, despite being commanded by the religious leaders of the day, these same apostles, we read, cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

[27 : 29] The apostles are eyewitnesses who pass on the gospel of Jesus and they've always done so in the face of opposition. but so precious is the true gospel that they do so even under

threat.

Now, very often these opening verses in verses 1 and 2 are taken to be all about the incarnation. That's what the apostles seen and heard. And it's taken that way often because of the similarities that there are between the opening of this letter and the opening of John's gospel.

And it's true that the opening of John's gospel has the incarnation very much in view. And this causes some to read a denial of the incarnation as the key error here in 1 John, the error of the departed.

And so they would read chapter 4, verse 2, to be all about believing that Jesus did really come as the God-man.

But I think if we look very carefully at these opening words, we can see that John chooses them very carefully indeed. Notice the word touch.

[28 : 50] He says that the apostles have touched. And the only time the word touched is used of touching Jesus is by Jesus himself in his glorious resurrected body when he says to his apostles, see my hands and my feet that it is I myself touch me and see for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

And John himself speaks of this gospel of the apostles seeing and touching with their hands the glorious risen Lord Jesus. And so this is more than about the incarnation.

It's about seeing and touching the risen Lord Jesus. Verse 2, John speaks of a life being manifest. That word manifest is the same word used by John in John chapter 21 to talk about how Jesus appeared or was revealed to the apostles by the sea of Tiberias after his resurrection.

Again, the glorious risen Lord Jesus. And so the apostolic gospel has a wonderful truth to proclaim, a wonderful reality to make known. And what is that?

It's verse 2, eternal life. Life that was previously only with the Father, but through Jesus has been brought into creation.

[30 : 20] Eternal life that is enjoyed right now by the risen Lord Jesus. Eternal life that is ours as we belong to him. this is the firmest of foundations because the apostles haven't just come face to face with the incarnate Jesus, but because they've come face to face with the first fruits of eternal life.

They've come face to face with the glorious resurrected Jesus. The antichrists, those who've departed from the gospel, those who've departed from gospel people and gospel churches, they can promise the world and they often do, don't they?

Just like Satan promised the world to Jesus. But such promises are hollow. They can be incredibly unsettling, promising what it seems we may want, offering us what seems like better purity.

Here's the way to end your struggle with sin. But really what they're offering is just calling evil good and calling sin love or some such thing.

And they can offer us better truth, truth that the whole world can get behind, truth that's popular. Or they can offer better victory, overcoming this world here and now, being on the side that wins here and now, instead of feeling that well-known feeling of being overcome by the world.

[31 : 51] that can be incredibly unsettling. But, departing from the apostles, departing from genuine gospel people and genuine gospel churches, and the genuine gospel is departing from the promise of eternal life that was witnessed by the apostles, that was seen and touched by them.

And so to do so is to pass up fellowship and fullness verses 3 to 5. To give up on the apostles is to give up on fellowship and fullness verses 3 to 5.

Continuing fellowship with the apostolic gospel brings continuing fellowship with God himself and the full joy that comes with it. The departed, the antichrists have left this church and they've left claiming to have fine progress, claiming deeper spirituality.

They've left with critiques of this gospel church, belittling and unsettling them. And so with that backdrop, when left wondering if your church that seems to be standing alone, which has been abandoned by those claiming greater godliness, when that's the case, what will bring reassurance? Well, only the fruit of the real gospel can comfort a church that's decimated by those who've supposedly moved on to better things. And the fruit of the genuine gospel promises fellowship and fullness.

[33 : 26] Look at verse three. The apostles were faithful in their task, what they saw and heard, they proclaimed. And it was proclaimed to the church that John was writing to, and it's the same gospel that we've received.

And look at the fruit of preaching that gospel. verse three, first, it is fellowship with the apostles, that you too may have fellowship with us.

It is sadly all too common that churches and denominations fall prey to the ways of the world. And in doing so, they sideline the revealed word of God.

Fellowship with the apostles is shaped by submitting to them and their gospel. But don't we know that their authoritative word is toxic in today's world?

The apostles will always be written off as restrictive or oppressive. Oh, their message is the concoction of man. They have little to do with the message of love and tolerance that comes from Jesus, or so the narrative goes.

[34 : 36] The apostles are not Jesus. Jesus doesn't treat women and the LGBT community the way the dreaded apostles did. Or the apostles, well, they had a message for their day, but now we know more than them.

We have a new word for a new day. Yes, let's respect the apostles and learn from them and listen to them, and then take that and translate it and reinvent it and reinterpret it along with our more modern, sophisticated, and contemporary ideals.

Well, look at what John says. Apostolic preaching is to produce fellowship with the apostles.

Now, the word fellowship is not used very often by John. Only here in chapter one of this letter does he use it. But its first use in scripture is in Acts chapter two, where the fruit of the apostles teaching was fellowship.

It was covenant relationship shared around the bread. It was genuine relationships of concern for one another, depth, closeness, and it was a fellowship and it was preaching that produced all.

[35 : 53] We stand on the shoulders of the apostles. We aren't to be embarrassed of them, but we're to find life in their message. And as we enjoy that genuine fellowship with them as we submit to their gospel, look at what it means, verse three.

It's actually not just sharing fellowship with men, but it's fellowship with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. The fruit of the apostles preaching is that we would have fellowship, genuine relationship with the Godhead.

God, there is no better way, there is no greater or deeper truth. Fellowship with the apostles grants us fellowship with the Father and the Son.

It allows us, chapter 2, verse 13, to know the Father, to really know him. And chapter 2, verse 14, it allows us to know him who is from the beginning, Jesus Christ.

It is in fellowship with God that we have sins forgiven. It is in fellowship with God that we have overcome the evil one. And it is in fellowship with God that we are in the place of joy, full joy, lasting joy.

[37 : 13] That's what John goes on to say. We've seen the fruit of the apostles preaching, but now the desire behind writing this. Verse 4, so that your joy may be complete.

The ESV says our joy, but as your joy in the footnotes, and I think your joy is better, because I think this is John quoting what he's already said in his gospel in chapter 16, verse 24.

And that's in the middle of the upper room discourse. And that's a place where Jesus speaks of full or complete joy throughout. As Jesus is preparing his disciples for his death, he talks of their weeping and lamenting, but then of their joy being full at his resurrection.

Fellowship with the apostles, hearing and believing their gospel, brings us into fellowship with the risen Lord Jesus. It brings us into fellowship with the one who has defeated death, and who right now is at the right hand of the Father, advocating for us.

what fellowship could be greater than that? The one who represents us so that before the Father we're genuinely forgiven and righteous and with sin removed.

[38 : 34] The only one who can do that is the Lord Jesus. He's the only one who brings us into genuine and lasting relationship with God himself. Departing from the gospel robs any possibility of that, continuing with the apostles, keeps us in fellowship with the risen and ascended Lord Jesus, and with the Father who has become our Father, who we can really call on in distress and pray, Abba, Father.

John wants the true people of God to be reassured of what they have and what they do not lack. Listen to how Calvin puts this.

He says, whoever then really perceives what fellowship with God is will be satisfied with it alone and will no more burn with desire for other things.

It can often seem like those who depart from gospel churches and gospel people and the gospel can often seem that they have an allure, that they're offering something that looks good, that looks superior, that looks easier.

Join us, be celebrated over here with us, fit him with this world over here with us. We're still a church, don't worry, we'll still call ourselves a church, but you can have it all.

[40 : 00] It can so easily and so often look and seem like remaining, like continuing is losing out. Friends, John tells us that sticking with the apostles is where full joy is found and lasting joy.

Whatever is on offer elsewhere, however shiny or seductive or spiritual looking, it's only a path away from joy. It's an offer to sip salt water.

And so John wants the true people of God to continue in the gospel. One thing that must be said here is that it is possible that departure from a congregation is not departing from the fellowship of verse three, but it's also possible that presence in a congregation does not equal belonging to the fellowship of verse three.

Remember, the departure here is not primarily physical, although there is physical departure. The departure is away from the apostles. The departure is about ceasing fellowship with the apostles. Well, as John concludes his opening to his letter, he speaks once again of the message, the word, the proclamation that has been entrusted to the apostles. And look at what he says of the message this time in verse five.

[41 : 27] He says, this is the message that we have heard from him and proclaimed to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. Now, John in his gospel uses light and darkness to refer to life and death and not just in the limited sense of being physically alive with breath in the lungs and physically dead with no heartbeat, but also in a moral sense.

So light refers to life in all that it should be, life as flourishing in relationship with the covenant God. And death refers to the curse with all that that means of being under the rule of sin and cut off from the covenant God.

And the final reassurance of John's prologue here is that fellowship with God is fellowship with the one who is light, the one who offers true life, fellowship with the one from whom flows all light, fellowship with the one who overcomes all darkness.

John is casting before our eyes the layers of truth that both encourage those who continue and expose those who depart. Abandoning this church was the sign for the departed that they were choosing darkness.

That's always been the way, isn't it? There has always been a conflict between light and darkness, between the seeds of Cain and the seed of evil.

[42 : 57] John makes mention of them in particular in chapter 3, and we saw that recently in our studies in Genesis. The light of the gospel is a dividing light, a revealing and exposing light, as much as it is a light of sweet hope and relief.

Friends, we will not be able to avoid the feeling of people leaving us and pronouncing pity on us and promising that to go their way is the way to prosper.

It has always been thus, because the light has come into the world and people have loved darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil.

John tells us God can have no part with darkness, and so John's words here are that God can have no part with the departed, for he is light and in him is no darkness at all.

But for those who continue, for those who stick with the apostles, for those who stick with gospel people and gospel churches, it is lasting, joyful fellowship with the Father in the light.

[44 : 11] John says, I am writing to you little children because your sins are forgiven. I am writing to you little children because you knew the Father. Don't give him up.

Abide in what you have. John says, continue. Let's pray. Father, how we marvel at what you have given to us.

In days of great confusion and in days where many churches have chosen to prefer the world to the word, would you grant to us great clarity and great courage to cling on to the word of life and to comprehend the manifold riches that are ours in your Son, in whose name we pray.

Amen.