

The Truth about Their Sin and Their Love

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Date: 15 January 2023

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[0 : 00] But Josh is going to be preaching to us this evening and continuing in, the study began last week in 1st John, first letter of the Apostle John. You'll find it near the end of the New Testament after the epistles of Peter and just before, surprise, surprise, 2nd John and 3rd John.

So we're reading the first letter of John and we're going to read from verse 6 of chapter 1 through to chapter 2 verse 11.

We began looking at this last week and orienting and introducing ourselves and we're carrying on picking up at verse 6 where John says, If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie.

And do not practice or do not do the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. The truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[1 : 23] If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins.

And not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments. Whoever says, I know him, but does not keep his commandments is a liar.

And the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him.

Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. Beloved, I'm writing to you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning.

[2 : 30] The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I'm writing to you, which is true in him and in you. Because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

Whoever says he's in the light and hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light.

And in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness. And there's not nowhere he's going.

Because the darkness has blinded his eyes. Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Well, do have 1 John open again in front of you.

Things are not always as they seem. After all, we're rather unlikely to paint ourselves and our choices in the most negative light.

[3 : 49] We tend to minimize mistakes and show ourselves great flex and generosity about the things we think and say and do. Of course, it's a lot easier to be more objective or more harsh in our conclusions about others.

But when it comes to representing ourselves, instinctively we spin things to appear favorable. And that is true when it comes to whether we want to take the Lord Jesus seriously or not.

There are always phrases that can be used and are used to call evil good. Progress will be talked about.

Love will likely feature in the conversation. It will be out of compassion that new positions are adopted. We just really care about these people. And so it seems loving to understand and embrace their expressions.

Superior knowledge will be cited. We now know more. Things have moved on. We have a fuller, more sophisticated picture of the world. Or we have the true, the niche, the elite version of Christianity.

[4 : 57] And so those who abandon the apostolic faith, well, the narrative around them will not be that they've decided to be heretics. It won't be a narrative that explains that they've chosen darkness over the light.

Or it won't be described as wanting to stand in opposition to become enemies of God. No, it'll be positive. We hear that all the time, don't we?

Former evangelicals waxing lyrical about their newfound fulfillment. Their more comprehensive, spirit-led faith. It's more open and tolerant and loving.

Ours is a faith still learning and listening to voices from across the faith spectrum. Warm, inclusive, and open. Not cold, hard, and closed like what we left behind.

Friends, such narratives are not new. We mustn't be naive. Those who abandon gospel people, gospel churches, and the apostolic gospel will always do so with claims that it is a positive direction they're going in.

[6 : 07] And they'll beckon you to follow them. Or they'll belittle you for not following them. Listen to Dick Lucas on this. He says, Satan's masterpiece would be to lead Christian churches back into idolatry while they still retain all the outward form and structures of Christianity.

Satan's masterpiece would be to lead Christian churches to believe that which is opposed to the gospel, that which the world loves, that which indulges intellectual snobbery, that which is darkness, whilst having them retain the mirage and the appearance of Christianity.

That would be his masterpiece. And isn't that what we see all around us? The national churches, they have their dog collars and their rubes. They have their historic buildings.

They play about with incense and altars. They retain the spiritual language, but they have parted company with the apostles and their gospel. Their fellowship is no longer with the apostles, and so it is no longer with the Father and the Son.

And others will be tempted to follow suit. That's what John made so plain in the verses that we looked at last week. The recipients of this letter had been shaken by some of their number departing from them, as we see in chapter 2, verse 19.

[7 : 35] And as John finishes off his introduction to this letter, he spells out the claims of the departed, of the Antichrists. And remember that with that phrase, Antichrist, John isn't meaning a horned red creature with a trident and a teal.

He uses it of those who are opponents of Christ, but more than that, those who set up a competitor to Christ. And so the departed have moved theologically and morally to depart from this church and from the apostles.

When people depart from the apostles, they are departing from the Father and the Son. Theirs is a journey from light to darkness.

And so it is ultimately the apostles who are being departed from. Notice that in 2:19. They went out from us, for they were not of us.

Now, departure from the apostles and physical departure from a local church are not necessarily a cause and effect thing. It's possible to be physically part of a gospel church whilst beginning to depart or having departed completely from the apostles.

[8 : 51] But it is possible to physically depart from a gospel church whilst not departing from the apostles. Here in this letter, it seems that there is a physical departure.

And John is saying that that's helpful because it exposes the real departure that's gone on, which is departing from the apostolic gospel. But we also need to be realistic that where there is a departure from a physical church, it may also reveal the beginnings of or the climax of a departure from the apostles.

And so no truly gospel church should be surprised that people do leave their midst from time to time. It ought to be no surprise that those who turn to darkness make great claims as they do so. All kinds of claims that can seem impressive and sound grand and appealing, but ultimately they're fantastic claims or false claims. They will all sound so wonderful, but it will all be so wrong.

And that's what we see in our passage this evening. John uses the phrase, if we say, three times, and the phrase, whoever says, three times. It's the same phrase, but in different tenses.

[10:13] And we saw last week that John uses a change in tense as a way of signaling a structural marker. And so we have here two sets of three sayings. There are six claims that are made.

And whilst John paints them in a hypothetical-sounding way with a language of if or whoever, I think we can take these six claims as the very claims that the departed were making.

And there's a pattern to the sayings. John uses them both to expose and encourage. That's what he's doing all throughout this letter. Exposing and encouraging.

Pointing out the reality of what it means to depart from the apostles and pastorally reassuring those who continue with the apostles. And so each of the six sayings begin with claims that are shown to be false and we'll work through those.

And they're each followed by words of reassurance. Both sets of three claims have their own central idea. The first set focus on claims about sin or rather sinlessness.

[11:20] And the second set focus on claims about love and hate. And all six claims are bookended by darkness.

One, six, we see darkness. And then from chapter two, verse eight, darkness. A section bookended by that. And so a section that helps us understand what darkness means and encapsulates darkness for us.

And each set of claims builds up to be more pointed in exposing exactly what was going on with those who had departed this church.

So let's look at them in turn. Firstly, we see in verses, in chapter one, verse six to chapter two, verse two, proud claims of righteousness, but the pointed exposure of sin.

Proud claims of righteousness, but the pointed exposure of sin. From one, six to two, two. The point of view is that avoidance of the talk of sin or claims as to the absence of sin or the redefinition of sin are a telltale mark of a departure from the true faith.

[12:31] The true people of God claim not to have an absence of sin, but acknowledge its presence. And so those who have fellowship with the apostles are conscious of their sin.

They confess their sin and they're cleansed of their sin. Three false claims. The first one, verse six, they claim to have fellowship with God whilst walking in darkness.

Remember verse five, God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. Those who have departed claim to have fellowship with God, but they have no such thing for they have gone out into the darkness.

John says elsewhere that the light has come into the world and they have loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. And so John says, this is a false claim.

Those who claim to be in fellowship with God whilst walking out of step with the apostolic gospel are shown to be liars who do not practice the truth.

[13:39] John says, you can't have it both ways. You can't claim spirituality. You can't claim to be a friend of God whilst ignoring his gospel word. That makes you a liar.

It shows you're not on the side of truth. So when you hear a church or a minister or a Christian talking about a wonderful walk with God, a grand spiritual journey that entails living in direct conflict with God's pattern for humanity, that rejects God's law of liberty and life, that rejects God's pattern and picture for life in his kingdom, then John leads the way in saying that they are proving themselves to be liars.

That is not a wonderful walk with God. For God is light and in him is no darkness at all. These are pointed words from John.

He doesn't pull his punches. He doesn't miss and hit the wall. There are some who would like to try and set aspects of God's character against or above each other. Some want to claim that the distinguishing aspect of God's character is that he is love.

That's the key truth about God. saying that the greatest picture, the greatest truth about God is that he is love. But friends, that is unhelpful. Of course, I'm not denying that God is love.

[15:00] He is. Of course he is. But in the same letter, John also says that God is light. So how do we hold these things together? God's character cannot be in conflict with itself.

God doesn't have attributes in the way that we often think of that. No, instead, it's best for us to remember that God only ever acts as himself. It's not that sometimes he has love and shows it, that he acts lovingly as he saves people.

And sometimes he's holy and he's light. As if the holiness of God is an Old Testament thing, but God's love is a New Testament thing. No. God is always, only, ever himself.

His whole character drives all that he does. It's what theologians would call the doctrine of divine simplicity. So John is saying we cannot claim to know and love God whilst playing fast and loose with his law.

We cannot say, yes, but how could a loving God say that X or Y is wrong? Or I believe in God's love so much that I know he won't reject me because of this little thing where I disagree with him.

[16:21] John is clear, we can't have it both ways. Fellowship with God is shown by how we treat the apostolic gospel. So any claims of great depth of relationship and fellowship and journeying with God ought to match up to a life that takes the Bible seriously.

The false claim then is the claim of fellowship with God, but it is exposed as a lie by a life that ignores God's word.

And each false claim, each exposure is followed by an encouragement to those who continue. And so look at how John reassures those who continue.

Verse 7, But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

And the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Do you see that? Fellowship here is the church with the apostles and fellowship is revealed by walking in the light.

[17:30] Believing and trusting that all that God calls good is good. That's what shows that we have fellowship with him. And I notice what John isn't saying here.

He isn't giving Christians a test to see if they really are Christians. No, he's reassuring them. And so verse 7 finishes with cleansing from sin. Spiritual flourishing isn't covering up sin.

It's having it cleansed. John isn't saying that you must be perfect to belong to God. He isn't saying that the company of the apostles is reserved for those who exhibit perfection.

No. It's not for those who claim an absence of sin, but for those who acknowledge it. Because when we're conscious of sin, we can confess it and we can be cleansed of it.

That's what John reassures this shaken church with. The departed, they claim great fellowship with God, but that is an impossibility because they're in darkness. But you have fellowship with God because by holding on to the apostolic gospel, you have been washed clean.

[18:45] We see something similar in this second claim. Verse 8. If we say we have new sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

The departed made claims of great purity, maybe even of greater purity than those who remain. But the telltale sign of those who have abandoned the faith, abandoned the faith, is that sin is downplayed.

Oh, we don't sin. Oh, that isn't sin. Oh, we mustn't talk of sin. How basic, how unspiritual. Oh, to focus on sin is to shrink what Jesus has done.

It's far bigger and far more important and far more significant than just to think about sin. No, no. Let us not focus on such unsavory and negative things. Let's be more positive about life.

We're not sinners. We're spiritual. We're in search of progress. We're a flourishing people. And with big, beaming smiles, the idea of anything being sin is sidelined and ignored and obscured and morphed and confused and mocked.

[19:58] Well, verse 8, John is clear. To claim such a thing, to minimize sin, to overlook it, to call it good, is to deceive ourselves and to be indwelt not by truth but by lies.

So that's John's exposure. And do you see verse 9, the encouragement? He says to those who continue, if we confess our sin, if we acknowledge it, if we're aware of it and confess it, then it isn't a barrier.

It isn't a weight around our ankles that traps us in the depths of unspirituality with no way out. No, if we confess it, then God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So you see the way of true righteousness, the way of true spirituality isn't hiding sin. It isn't claiming to be above it. It isn't redefining it. It's having it washed away and gaining righteousness from Jesus with whom we have fellowship.

And so the final claim of this triplet, verse 10, if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

[21:22] It follows suit, doesn't it, if we start to redefine sin or start to downplay it, if we slip into thinking that it isn't an ongoing struggle for the Christian, then it won't be long before the claim moves from I don't do anything wrong to I've never done anything wrong.

You see the progression from verse 8 to verse 10. Verse 8, we have no sin to verse 10, we have not sinned. Now some have taken verse 8 to be a claim about not having a sinful nature, a denial of sorts of original sin.

I'm not sure that's quite right. This phrase is used only here in 1 John, but it's used by John four times in his gospel, and each time in the gospel it is to be guilty of sins.

It's not about a nature thing. It's about committing sins. So verse 8, it must be in reference to the thought that the departed in their newfound spiritual fervor were now free of the struggle of sin.

And so we're free of the moral guilt that came with sin. But verse 10 broadens that claim in a backwards direction. And in effect, it was redefining what it was to be a Christian, what it was to be saved.

[22 : 43] It was redefining what salvation meant. Calling God a liar. Ripping out of the hands of the church the idea that Jesus is Lord and Savior.

Oh, being spiritual, being a true Christian isn't to do with sin. It's all to do with seeing the world in a newfound way.

It's all to do with seeing the intrinsic good in people. Perhaps their claim to salvation is a claim to be in the new, to be enlightened. And so John's exposure is to say, such a thing makes God a liar.

And reveals that far from being enlightened, they do not have His word in them. I take it that these three claims when brought together would have made it abundantly clear why the departed were in fact the departed.

A bit like at the end of every episode of Scooby-Doo, having had the great mystery and the great scare by whoever the creature or the ghost was, there would always come time to pull off the disguise and reveal who the baddie was.

[23 : 56] John was pulling the disguise off the departed and saying, look, they've left physically because they'd already left.

Examine their claims and see that they're lingering in the darkness. They have costumes, yes, that read we're shining bright, bright lights, but underneath the reality is darkness.

So the third claim, we have not sinned in the past and the exposure, well, any such claim like that questions the very character of God. It shows a distance between us and God and removes the need of a Savior.

It removes the need for Jesus. Well, what's John's encouragement? Chapter 2, verse 1 and 2, he says, my little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

John wants those who continue to actually be concerned with battling sin, not redefining it or ignoring it, but doing battle and fighting to leave it behind in a real way.

[25 : 08] Brothers and sisters, we mustn't be taken by claims of a secret to leaving sin behind. We mustn't be taken in by claims that redefine what sin is.

But we must long to leave sin behind. Well, now we'll see John's realism and reassurance in this.

I'm sure it will be unsettling if these claims that were being made, it would be unsettling for genuine believers, wouldn't it, who knew the struggle with sin?

Who wouldn't long to be free of that struggle? Who isn't frustrated committing sin? So how unsettling it would be if the departed leave and say to those who remain, we're leaving you because you're embroiled in sin.

We're leaving you because you're not doing the right thing. Yeah, tell me about it. And how often when we hear someone claiming no struggle with sin, when they say things like, oh no, I wouldn't be tempted to do that.

Oh, that holds no desire for me. How often when we hear things like that, do we feel like the worst Christian in the world? Perhaps not a Christian at all. How could we be, we'll ask.

[26 : 28] Well, look at John's encouragement and his realism. 2-1, but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Hear those words, words that are so precious to me, but if anyone does sin, John doesn't say we're cast out, he doesn't say we're proven to be liars, but if anyone does sin, and I do, if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Remember John's opening? He says, the apostles were those who heard and saw and touched, they touched the resurrected glorious Christ. They were eyewitnesses of the one who bore the weight of sin on the cross and who defeated death.

They were eyewitnesses of the one who was raised and vindicated. They were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ who now, at this very minute, sits at the right hand of the Father, advocating for us.

If anyone does sin, the resurrected Christ is right now with the Father, representing us, declaring us washed clean, righteous before him.

[27 : 56] John is so clear here. He reassures that wonderful truth, but he doesn't downplay sin as the departed do, quite the opposite. John longs that the true people of God would fight sin, would struggle against it, and that struggle is a sign of life, friends.

He longs that they continue in that, but if anyone does sin, when we do slip up, we have an advocate. sin merits wrath.

Sin merits wrath. So, lowly Christian, a lowly sinful church, continue.

Continue with the apostles. Continue confessing sin, and continue in the knowledge that you've been cleansed by Christ, the glorious resurrected Christ, who right now sits at the right hand of the Father, advocating for you.

Well, that's the first set of claims. Now, on to the second set, and we see in these proud claims of relationship, but the pointed exposure of hatred.

[29 : 23] hatred. Proud claims of relationship, but the pointed exposure of hatred. Chapter 2, verses 3 to 11. Tangible evidence of closeness with God is seen by closeness to God's people.

Love for God plays out in love for God's people. Hatred for God plays out in hatred for God's people. The first set of claims focused on sin.

The second set of claims focus on love and hate. And so the first claim, verses 3 and 4. By this we knew that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

Whoever says, I know him, but doesn't keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. Notice, like the first set of three claims.

The first claim is the most broad, and then as we move along, it hones in. The first claim here is somewhat similar to the corresponding claim in the first triplet.

[30 : 34] Instead of fellowship with God, the claim here is knowing God. And instead of walking in darkness, the claim here is not keeping God's commandments. And both conclude with the reality that these claims expose the departed as those who lie, and thus those who do not practice the truth.

We've covered the ground of some of this, but the particular difference here is John's use of the word commandment. And it is that idea that is carried through the rest of the claims in the second triplet.

And John talks about the commandment very often throughout his writing. he speaks of a new commandment in various places, the commandment to love one another.

And he explains that himself by saying that to love one another is to walk according to God's commandments. And so in the first claim, John is setting the scene to then talk about love amongst the brothers.

The first claim here is that we knew God, God. But John exposes it by the reality that the departed don't listen to God. And then he has an encouragement again to verse 5.

[31 : 54] The keeping of God's words is proof of God's love. Look at that phrase in verse 5, the phrase love of God. That is somewhat ambiguous.

John could be talking about God's love for his people. He could be talking about God's people's love for him. Or he could be talking about the love that originates in God, but is seen through his people loving one another, his love at work in his people.

I think the ambiguity is helpful for us because John equates love for God with love for his people.

And so in a sense here, it's all of these things. And so I think John is saying, what I think John is saying is that when God's people walk in God's ways, then God's love is fully developed.

It has matured in them. It is fully in them, fulfilled in them, made perfect in them. And so what does that look like?

Well, listen to Jesus' own words on this. He said, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the great and first commandment, and a second is like it.

[33 : 10] You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets. On these two commandments depend the word of God.

Well, that's not what the departed are doing. And here's the encouragement. John is saying, your knowing God is seen in loving him and loving one another.

The departed don't love God because they've abandoned his people. They've left you. And so they can't possibly know him. They can't know the God he has love because they do not love his people. Well, brothers and sisters, however stumblingly we do it, when we show an ongoing commitment to the people of God, to the odd brother or sister you have around you in this church, church, that is the love of God in you.

Being here Sunday by Sunday, committed to your church family, joining morning and evening for worship together, gathering to pray for and with brothers and sisters, taking an interest in others, serving with and serving others, that is the love of God blossoming in you.

[34 : 34] And the second claim here is similar. John says, verses 6 and 7, whoever abides in him ought to walk in the way in which he walked.

And verse 7, next here, what John is talking about. When John talks about a commandment, he is usually talking about the commandment to love one another. To help us understand this, I think it would be good to turn over to 2 John.

We'll turn over to 2 John, and we'll look at verses 5 and 6. And John says, And now I ask you, dear lady, that's the church, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you would walk in it.

Notice the logic, verse 5, here is the commandment we've had from the beginning, the commandment, love one another. Love means following the commandments, plural.

[35 : 49] that's the command you've had from the beginning. John defines the commandment singular, the commandment to love one another, by pointing to the commandments, plural.

Love is living according to God's law. To love one another is to practice God's law amongst God's people. God's law is a picture of what life in his perfected kingdom will be like.

It's a reflection of God's own character. It is to live in the light. Well, back to 1 John 2, 6. So when God's people embrace his law, they will, in the truest way possible, be walking in the same way in which he walked, they'll be loving one another as God loves.

They'll be walking in the light. Verse 8, at the same time, it's a new commandment that I'm writing to you, which is true in him. The departed do not walk in the way in which he walked.

Jesus was the truly righteous one. He was the one who displayed perfectly in himself what it is to love God's people, what it is to keep God's commandments. The departed don't do that. They've gone out from God's people, gone out from his word.

[37 : 15] But look at the encouragement to those who continue in verse 8. It is not just true in Jesus. John says it is true in him and in you.

What is true of Jesus is true of you. You do love one another because you continue with the apostles, because you take God's word seriously.

Friends, I'm sure that many of us can think of times we've struggled to love one another in this church. But John here isn't asking us to introspectively examine if this is true of us.

What he is saying is that if we're committed to the apostolic gospel, then as it works and abides within us, love for one another will pour out of us, will build up in us, is flowing out of us, because we belong to God in whom there is no darkness.

And so the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining in Christ and in us, in our midst, as we hold tightly together to the gospel.

[38 : 37] As we do that, the trajectory will be less darkness and more light, more love. And so the scooby-doo moment of the second triplet, time to rip off the disguise.

Kim 3, verse 9, whoever says he is in the light but hates his brother is still in darkness. Friends, the exposure, the let's see behind the mask, the reality is that they hate us.

The departed claim light. They claim to have gone on to better and bigger things, but the truth is they hate the apostles, they hate you, and they hate God.

Isn't that so often the case when people leave gospel churches? How often do you see a reverend talking on the TV or radio about whatever the day's issue is and they're introduced as being a former evangelical?

Well, you can be sure that what will spew out of their mouths is hatred towards the gospel and towards gospel people. Superiority will be the tone, pity will be present, and they'll pontificate about the new light they find since leaving behind the closed and tolerant, backwards form of Christianity of which they were formerly a part.

[40 : 00] Friends, when people leave a gospel church in which they've been deeply entitled that can very often reveal an awful trajectory. The departure from the apostles may be obvious at that point, or it may only be in its earliest days, but a trajectory away from a church that perseveres, that perseveres at cost with the apostles, a trajectory away from that kind of church is an alarming thing.

Look at the language John uses of the departed. When they depart from the apostles and from gospel churches, they exhibit hatred. Where I grew up, there was a church with a bustling youth group, and one of the influential leaders left the church over disagreements with the pastor, and they went to another church the next time.

And they ended up taking lots of others with them, lots of the young people, with the claim that having found this new church, they were only now really a Christian. This new church had opened them up to really know the Spirit.

They said they weren't a Christian before, but now they were, and a bunch of folks followed. That was to exhibit hatred for that church and for the apostles.

Departing a gospel church for the promise of something more. That can be the promise of the best, a church that really has the Spirit, or that can be the promise of being more culturally relevant, more sensitive to the world around, more Presbyterian.

[41 : 42] All kinds of claims of many things that we can easily grow to idolize, to hold alongside or above the apostolic gospel. Additional things that usurp the apostolic faith, that usurp love for God and for one another, and keeping his commandments.

Look how John ends this letter, 521. He says, Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Don't go chasing these things that are placed above the gospel. Perhaps you've experienced people claiming these things. John tells us what's behind it.

It's hatred for the apostles and for God and for you. Those who claim to have moved on from the gospel that the apostles have passed down to us will exhibit hatred for those who continue with the gospel.

Because verse 10, abiding in the light is loving the brothers. That's what light looks like. John tells us in this passage once again, continue with the apostles and continue with those who belong to the apostles.

[43 : 00] That is not the place of stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going. Departing is the beginning of a journey that will never end.

It's the beginning of a journey out into darkness that will blind you. John reassures us there are two types of people in this letter and in this world.

Those who continue in the apostolic gospel, bound with their brothers and growing in love with them and for them. Those likely to be pariahs to the world around and even to many so-called churches.

Those who dwell in the light and are leaving darkness behind. That's one type of person. And there are those who depart from these things and so depart from God.

Those who are engulfed in darkness. John says, continue choosing the light. Let's pray. Lord, protect us.

[44 : 14] As a church, we pray. Grant to us eyes to see that which is not as it seems. Eyes to distinguish truth from falsehood.

Grant us your grace to make us and to keep us repentant. And help us to cherish above all else your law of liberty, of life, of love.

So that we would hold fast to the faith once for all entrusted to the saints. and we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.