

August 13, 2017

Walking in the Light

"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by 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, purifies us from all sin."

I John 1:5-10

A friend called this week to talk about whether or not he should be watching a particular TV show he enjoys. Like a lot of fellow believers I have known over the years he struggles with 'rules' that he needs to keep in order to be pleasing to God. One of the biggest challenges to accepting the grace of God is our misunderstanding of how God wants us to live for him and in turn to relate to this world.

In his letter to the first Corinthian believers writes, ***"Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me—but I will not be mastered by anything."*** (I Corinthians 6:12) Under the Law of Moses nearly everything was covered by rules and regulations. Under our new covenant I am convinced that most of those rules are no longer in place.

Instead Jesus calls us to be transformed in our very being so that every part of our being reflects this changed existence. Paul would thus write to the Roman believers, ***"Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your reasonable act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*** (Romans 12:1-2) So, our relationship with Jesus is guided not by rules and regulations, but by an entirely different standard of behavior. Our lives are guided by who we are all of the time.



John touches on this same concept when he writes, ***"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes, and the boasting of what he does—does not come from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever...and now dear children, continue in***

him so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming."
(I John 2:15-28)

For most of us this is a very difficult concept of relationship, one guided by who I am and less by rules and regulations. Frankly, we like rules and regulations. Rules and regulations allow us to define our behaviors in terms of what we shouldn't do. So, using an example I mentioned not long ago. Should we not use the word 'awesome' to refer to anything in the world by only to God. That's a great rule, but we are not now called to live by such rules and regulations.

Instead, Jesus calls us to live by a broad standard, applied through our transformed lives. **"Do not love the world or anything in the world."** Becomes a standard of behavior and not a rule. Do I live in this world? Yes. Do I enjoy things in this world? Yes. Am I overwhelmed by desires for worldly things? No! Absolutely not! As Paul told the Corinthians; **"I will not be mastered by anything."** As I learn to apply this standard in my life my approach to the issues that arise day by day are dealt with because of who I am becoming and not because I am following a set of rules and regulations.

John would complete this thought with this call, **"And now dear children, continue in him so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming."** Even though I live in this world, I need to and must live as a child of God, no matter what issues and obstacles I face.