

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF FIRST JOHN

SIN BREAKS FELLOWSHIP!

Read 1 John 1:5-10

Introduction

Tragically, those who have strayed from the true Christian faith still believe that they have fellowship with the true God. John's opponents claimed to have fellowship with Christ. But their faith had been reinterpreted and corrupted with the Hellenistic worldview of their age. Their distortion gave them a license to live immorally while still pretending that they were faithful believers. John calls their self-deception a lie.

In our age, we're in danger of the same thing. Instead of following Jesus with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we have substituted a kind of easy believe-ism, with the promise of forgiveness for anything we might do. Instead of radical discipleship, only a watered-down shell of Christianity remains, "having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:5).

Light and Darkness

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." (v5)

John isn't making this up; these are not his own personal opinions or ideas about God. This is God's message about Himself (which we have heard from Him), which John now reveals to us (and declare to you). What John will tell us about God is what God has told us about Himself. We can't be confident in our own opinions or ideas about God unless they are genuinely founded on what God has said about Himself.

We must begin our understanding of God here – that God is Light. John declares this on the simple understanding that God Himself is light; and light by definition has no darkness at all in it; for there to be darkness, there must be an absence of light. A good definition of God is, "God is the only infinite, eternal, and unchangeable spirit, the perfect being in whom all things begin, and continue, and end." Another way of saying that God is perfect is to say that God is light. Therefore, if there is a problem with our fellowship with God, it is our fault. It is not the fault of God because there is no sin or darkness in Him at all. Any approach to relationship with God that assumes, or even implies, that God might be wrong, and perhaps must be forgiven by us, is at its root blasphemous and directly contradicts what John clearly states here.

Sin and Fellowship

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." (v6)

John first deals with a false claim to fellowship. Based upon this, we understand that it is possible for some to claim a relationship with God that they do not have. We can also say that it is possible for someone to think they have a relationship with God that they do not have. Many Christians are not aware of their true condition. They know they are saved and have experienced conversion and have repented at some time in their life. Yet they do not live in true fellowship with God.

John speaks of a "walk-in" darkness, indicating a pattern of living. This does not speak of an occasional lapse, but of a lifestyle of darkness. We lie and do not practice the truth. God has no darkness at all (1

John 1:5). Therefore, if one claims to be in fellowship with God (a relationship of common relation, interest, and sharing), yet does walk in darkness, it is not a truthful claim. The issue here is fellowship, not salvation. The Christian who temporarily walks in darkness could still be saved, but not in fellowship with God.

If John said, “That is a lie,” it means he thinks in terms of things being true or being lies. John sees things much more clearly than our sophisticated age does, which doesn’t want to see anything in black or white, but everything in a pale shade of grey. The modern world often thinks in terms of “my truth” in an individualistic sense. John focused on the idea of God’s truth, ultimate truth.

Walking in the Light

“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (v7)

Walking in the light means to walk in a generally obedient life, without harbouring known sin or resisting the conviction of the Holy Spirit on a particular point. John’s message here means that “walking in the light” is possible. We know that on this side of eternity, sinless perfection is not possible without Christ. Since God is light (1 John 1:5), when we walk in the light we walk where He is. We are naturally together with Him in fellowship.

It is important to note that John mentioned fellowshiping with one another. If we do not have fellowship with one another, then one party or both parties are not walking in the light. Two Christians who are in right relationship with God will also naturally be in right relationship with each other.

As we walk in the light, we also enjoy the continual cleansing of Jesus. This is an indication that John does not mean sinless perfection by the phrase “walk in the light”; otherwise, there would be no sin to cleanse in this ongoing sense. The verb form John used in “cleanses us from all sin” is in the present tense, not in the future tense. We can do more than merely hope we will one day be cleansed. Because of what Jesus did on the cross for me, I can be cleansed today.

The Blood that Cleanses Sin

This continual cleansing is ours by the blood of Jesus. This does not mean the actual drops or molecules of His literal blood, but His literal death in our place and the literal wrath of the Father He endured on our behalf. The blood of Jesus Christ paid the penalty for all our sins — past, present, and future. The work of Jesus on the cross doesn’t only deal with the guilt of sin that might send us to hell. It also deals with the stain of sin which hinders our continual relationship with God. We need to come to God often with the simple plea, “cleanse me with the blood of Jesus.” Not because we haven’t been cleansed before, but because we need to be continually cleansed to enjoy continual relationship.

We can be cleansed, by the blood of Jesus, from **all sin**. The sin we inherited from Adam, the sin we committed as kids, the sins of our growing up; sins against our father, against our mother, against our brother and sister; sins against our husbands or wives, against our children; sins against our employers or our employees, sins against our friends and our enemies; lying, stealing, cheating, adultery, swearing, drugs, booze, promiscuity, murder; sins that haunt us every day, sins we didn’t even know we did — **all sin** can be cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

Sin is the hindrance to fellowship and the blood of Jesus, received by faith as the payment for our sin, solves the problem of sin and opens the way to fellowship with God.

- You can’t come to fellowship with God through philosophical speculation.

- You can't come to fellowship with God through intellectual education.
- You can't come to fellowship with God through drugs or entertainment.
- You can't come to fellowship with God through scientific investigation.
- You can *only* come to fellowship with God by dealing with your sin problem through the blood of Jesus.

Honesty Regarding Sin

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and 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. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” (vv8-10)

John has introduced the ideas of walking in the light and being cleansed from sin. But he did not for a moment believe that a Christian can become sinlessly perfect all their lives. To think this of ourselves is to deceive ourselves, and to say this of ourselves is to lie — the truth is not in us.

There are few people today who think they are sinlessly perfect, yet not many really think of themselves as sinners. Many will say “I make mistakes” or “I’m not perfect” or “I’m only human,” but usually they say such things to excuse or defend. This is different from knowing and admitting “I am a sinner.” To say that we have no sin puts us in a dangerous place because God’s grace and mercy is extended to sinners, not to “those who make mistakes” or “I’m only human” or “no one is perfect” people, but sinners. We need to realize the victory and forgiveness that comes from saying, “I am a sinner — even a great sinner — but I have a Saviour who cleanses me from all sin.”

Though sin is present, it need not remain a hindrance to our relationship with God — we may find complete cleansing (from all unrighteousness) as we confess our sins. To confess means, “to say the same as. “When we confess our sin, we are willing to say (and believe) the same thing about our sin that God says about it. Jesus’ story about the religious man and the sinner who prayed before God illustrated this; the Pharisee bragged about how righteous he was, while the sinner just said God be merciful to me a sinner (Luke 18:10-14). The one who confessed his sin was the one who agreed with God about how bad he was. Confess translates a verb in the present tense. The meaning is that we should keep on confessing our sin — instead of referring to a “once-for-all” confession of sin at our conversion.

Our sins are not forgiven because we confess. If this were the case — if forgiveness for a sin could only come where there was confession — then we would all be damned because it would be impossible for us to confess every sin, we ever commit. We are forgiven because our punishment was put upon Jesus, we are cleansed by His blood. However, confession is still vital to maintain relationship with God, and this is the context John speaks from. As God convicts us of sin that is hindering our fellowship with Him, we must confess it and receive forgiveness and cleansing for our relationship with God to continue without hindrance.

Faithful God

Because of Jesus’ work, the righteousness of God is our friend — ensuring that we will be forgiven because Jesus paid the penalty of our sin. God is being faithful and just to forgive us in light of Jesus.

The promise of 1 John 1:9 shouldn’t lead us into sin, saying “Hey, I’ll go ahead and sin because God will forgive me.” It should lead us out of sin, knowing that God could only be faithful and just in relation to His word. Paul wrote: *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly*

not! *How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*” (**Romans 6:1-2**). Deliberate sinful lifestyle will very likely lead to seared heart and therefore, no confession and no need for forgiveness.

If we deny the presence of sin, we are self-deceived and are denying God’s Word. Yet, though sin is present, so is its remedy — so sin need never be a hindrance to our relationship with God.