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# *The Epistles of John*

Living in the Light

## **1 John 1:5–2:2**

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*One of the situations I have observed over the years is the rejection of God's truth by some churches. This has especially been an issue because of the effect the twisting of Scriptures has had in the homosexual community.*

*Over the years I have known, worked with and appreciated as people a number of homosexuals. But they had chosen a life-style that is in direct opposition to Scripture. This is dangerous not only because of the spiritual implications, but because of the physical and emotional dangers of living in a way that is a direct violation of God's creative order. (Keep in mind any sexual activity out of the confines of a heterosexual, monogamous marriage is sin, not just homosexuality.)*

*The role of the church should be to help these individuals recognize that they are sinners in need of a savior. Believers should love these people, being open to be used by the Lord to bring them the message of salvation. And when individuals are saved, they should continue to love them, and give them the light of God's presence. Then over time, these people will come to understand God's demand that they recognize and repent of their sin. Finally, the church should be an environment in which the slow process of growing away from their sin and towards the Lord can occur.*

*But frequently certain members of Christendom have taken the position that homosexuality isn't sin. The teachings of Scripture are not for today. The individual can be a Christian Homosexual and express God's love in his or her homosexuality. And so these so called Christians leave the individual bound by sin, cut off from God, and without any understanding that the work of Christ frees from the bondage of sin.*

*I can't think of any better, or for that matter, sadder example of the result of the kind of heretical thinking that John is dealing with in his call to believers to walk in light. And it is no wonder that he calls those who claim light and walk in darkness, liars. For those who say to the homosexual, "You are not a sinner" are liars and are tools of the devil, keeping men and women from Christ's saving grace and freedom from their sin.*

This morning we are going to examine the contrasts between light and darkness. We will see that while Christians are no longer sinners, they do sin. Let us first take a look at the passage, and then we will see how John's concerns apply to us. Let us understand that the main difference between the life of the believer and the unbeliever should be the reality of God's light in our lives. We are to walk in a way that reflects His presence and the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

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**I God's Light**  
**II Man's Self-deception**

**Verses 5- 7**  
**Verses 8-10**

**I God's Light: Verse 5:** John has something to say. His message comes from Jesus. It is a deceptively simple message. God is light, and in Him is no darkness. It is deceptively simple because its implications are vast.

By light John refers to God's attributes of truth and purity. Because God is light, there is no untruth or impurity in Him. This fact answers many of the questions asked by unbelievers.

If God says it is only through Christ that one can be saved, than there is no other way. God, by His very nature, can only speak truth. Therefore, anything that contradicts what God says cannot be true. Consequently, to say that one can come to Him any other way than through Christ is false.

Some ask: "Why does God let anyone go to hell?" But God is totally true and totally pure. There isn't any impurity in Him. The sinner is not pure and therefore God cannot accept him. No impurity can be allowed into God's presence. God offers the way of purity, but when not accepted the result is being sent from His presence.

**Verse 6:** In the following verses we find three claims from those in darkness as to why they are actually in light. John answers the first of the claims here. Baker describes this claim as:

*"moral behavior is a matter of indifference in one's relationship to God."*<sup>1</sup>

John follows logic in his next comments. He notes that since God is light, fellowship with Him takes place in the midst of His light. When an individual walks in darkness, that is, his life isn't typified by truth and purity, then he isn't in fellowship with God. A claim of fellowship, while at the same time walking in darkness, is proof of the darkness. The claim therefore is a lie.

**Verse 7:** Conversely when an individual walks in the God's light then there is fellowship. This fellowship is with both God and fellow believers. This fellowship is a product of the cleansing we receive through the shed blood of Christ. Again, an underlying principle here is that fellowship with God only comes when one is covered by the work of Christ on the cross. The message we must constantly give out to those who walk in darkness is:

*"... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).*

Sin must be dealt with.

*"In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).*

Therefore it is only through Christ that salvation can be received. As Paul said:

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<sup>1</sup>Barker, Glenn W., The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 12, 1,2,3 John, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1981, pg. 309.

***“ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ...” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).***

**II Man’s Self-deception: Verse 8:** John answers the claim the second claim which boils down to:

*“ immoral conduct does not issue in sin for one who knows God”<sup>2</sup>*

As believers, since we walk in light, we must tell the truth. Truth is that we are not without sin. When a believer says that he never sins, he lies, because he does sin. It is a little like receiving a medal for humility. As soon as you receive it you lose it because by taking it you are no longer humble.

**Verses 9-10:** John answers the next claim, which Baker describes as:

*“ the knowledge of God removes sin as even a possibility in the life of the believer.”<sup>3</sup>*

But John has a solution for the sin in our lives. He says we are to confess it. If Christians don’t sin, why do they need to confess? When we confess God not only forgives the specific sin repented of, but those of which we are unaware.

Now I have heard it said that Christ died on the cross. Our sins are forgiven. We therefore no longer need to ask for forgiveness because the penalty for our sin has been paid. But John says we sin and must ask forgiveness. Why?

First John says that fellowship is a product of walking in light. Truth is proof of light. Lying is proof of darkness. Darkness prevents fellowship with God. Therefore if we deny our sin, if we don’t confess it, we are out of fellowship with God.

Apparently, some of the false teachers, whom John was contracting, taught that “Christians” are without sin. Unfortunately there are some well accepted teachers today who essentially make this same claim. The argument is that since we are forgiven and have eternal life, than why do we need to ask forgiveness? They even reject a proper understanding of this passage. They ignore the difference between positional and practical perfection. But John says the very claim to sinless is a claim that makes God a liar. God says we do sin. Keep in mind that this passage is not written to the unbeliever. It is written to believers...

**III The Answer to Sin: Verses 1-2:** John makes this clear because he says he is writing to his little children. These are believers who were saved through his ministry. John encourages them not to sin.

One major difference between the believer and unbeliever is the believer can choose not to sin. Certainly a nonbeliever can choose in specific situations not to sin, but his life is typified by sin. The Christian can choose not to sin, and lives a life typified by righteousness, but...

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

John after having said don't sin, goes on to instruct us in what to do when we do sin. We are blessed because we have an intercessor with God. Christ, Who is without sin, is the sacrifice for our sin. Consequently when we sin He speaks as an advocate for us to the Father. He points to our covering of righteousness, His shed blood.

This cleansing from sin is seen as a continuous process. Christ's blood maintains our fellowship with the Father by our keeping short accounts. We must recognize and deal with our sin.

As believers we are to walk in light. Walking in light we have fellowship with the Father. When we sin, which we must recognize, we are in darkness. But because of the shed blood of Christ, when we confess our sin, we have an intercessor with the Father, and therefore fellowship remains both with God and one another.

Finally, John notes that Christ shed His blood for believers and unbelievers. But we know from what we have already seen, that the efficacy only comes with the recognition of sinfulness and the acceptance of the sacrifice.

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).*

All will not be saved.

**V Conclusion:** In this passage John makes the distinction between our positional perfection before God, and the practical imperfection that we experience on a day to day basis. The good news is we don't have to sin. The bad news is we do. The best news is when we sin we have an advocate with the Father.

There is much confusion on these issues today. Some theologians, in concern over an easy salvation, leave believers with the ideal that salvation is dependent on works. In contrast, others are so concerned with the presence of grace in our lives that they minimize the issue of sin. As already mentioned one individual has gone to far as to deny that John, in this passage, is speaking to believers.

These same positions can be identified as legalism versus license. Some Christians act as if violating some set of standards, established by them not Scripture, leads to loss of salvation, or at least proof of the lack of salvation. The other extreme holds that how one lives is irrelevant and that in God's grace anything is acceptable.

Reality is, God is concerned with the quality of our walk. And the quality is demonstrated by our love of Him and each other. If we truly love God and each other our actions will flow from that love and be pleasing to the Lord.

It is important that we recognize that God calls us to a walk in light. We do need to remember that our walk is to be different from that of the world. This difference is not so much in actions, though clearly we should not do much of what the world does. But the difference between the believer and the citizen of the world is in what drives behavior.

John would ask, are we God-centered? Do our choices reflect a concern with first of all pleasing God?

***“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).***

Notice this doesn't say what we can or can't do. Paul is calling us to an attitude of pleasing God. If we can please God by our actions, then what we are doing is acceptable.

Or, are we self-centered? Do our choices reflect a focus that says, “What makes me happy?” The “Me Generation” expressed this well. “If it feels good, do it.” We must examine our thought processes. Do most of our concerns center on our personal and/or emotional comfort. This can be observed in the following questions.

- Husbands, is much of our relationship with our wives typified by how their behavior makes us feel or inconveniences us?
- Wives, is a major focus of your lives, how your husband fails to meet your needs?
- Parents, does much of your concerns about your children focus on how their behavior effects your comfort level.
- Young people, are you always concerned about how your parents interfere with your fun? Do you worry about what your friends think of you? Do you see your teacher as an ogre placed in your life to make it miserable?

These same kinds of principles can be carried over into any of our relationships, employer to employee, or visa versa, pastor to flock, or parishioner to shepherd. Do our concerns focus on ourselves, or how we can move towards others in obedience to the Lord?

As the believer matures, his perspective becomes more consistent with God's desires. As we grow we become more God-centered as opposed to self-centered. God-centeredness is the only valid goal for our lives. This is why the call of the church is to make disciples. We are to help each other become more God-centered as we love and care for one another. The call is to be conformed to the image of Christ is what Paul is actually speaking about when he said:

***“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).***

John's message here is one of both challenge and comfort. The challenge comes when he says that we are to walk in light. Our lives are to be typified by truth. "

***“... (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)” (Ephesians 5:9).***

Clearly the call of Scripture is that our concerns need to move from self to others.

*“ It should be a joy to hold a candle to another. It will not waste our own light to impart it.”*  
~ Spurgeon <sup>4</sup>

The comfort is that John recognizes that sometimes we will fail. And our joy is that we have a loving savior Who intercedes for us and provides us the power to walk in His way.

***“ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).***

We are given the power to walk in light, and as a result others will have the opportunity to see God’s light, to accept His gift of salvation and find fellowship with God and with the family of believers.

*Here we are, gathered together as a family;  
Bound as one, lifting up our voices to the King of kings.  
We cry, “Abba, Father, worthy is Your name.  
Abba Father, worthy is Your name.”*

*Here we are, gathered together as a family;  
Bound as one, lifting up our voices to the King of kings.  
We sing, “Abba, Father, holy is Your name.  
Abba Father, holy is Your name.”* <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> McClure, J. B., editor, Pearls from Many Seas. AGES Software • Albany, OR, Version 2.0 © 1996, 1997

<sup>5</sup> Hampton, Steve, Maranatha! Music Praise Chorus Book, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, “Family Song,” Maranatha! Music, Laguna Hills, CA., 1993, #107

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<b>I</b>	<b>God's Light</b>	<b>Verses 5- 7</b>
<b>II</b>	<b>Man's Self-deception</b>	<b>Verses 8-10</b>
<b>III</b>	<b>The Answer to Sin</b>	<b>Verses 1- 2</b>
<b>IV</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	

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## **I God's Light:**

**Verse 5:**

**Verse 6:**

**Verse 7:**

*(Romans 3:23; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)*

## **II Man's Self-deception: Verse 8:**

**Verses 9-10:**

**III The Answer to Sin:**  
*(John 3:16)*

**IV Conclusion:**  
*(1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:9; Acts 1:8)*

- Husbands, \_\_\_\_\_
- Wives, \_\_\_\_\_
- Parents, \_\_\_\_\_
- Young people, \_\_\_\_\_

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Personal Application: We've talked before about the need for those around us to see God's light through us. If we are truly to be reflections of God's light then we can't worry about what kind of darkness people are living in, just the fact they are in the dark.

**Prayer for the Week: Lord, help us always be ready to shine Your light into the midst of darkness, and let us do so with Your love. Amen.**