

Maintaining Fellowship

1 John 1:5-10

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1 John 1:1-4 Summary: We could say that in these four verses, John gave us enough to live our whole Christian life on.

Lessons learned from this passage...

- John began with the *beginning* — the eternal God, who was before all things.
- God was physically manifested, and that he and others could testify to this as eyewitnesses.
- God is the *Word of life*, the *Logos*.
- This God is distinct from the person of God the Father.
- We may have fellowship with this God.
- We are often introduced into this fellowship by the fellowship of God's people.
- This eternally existent God, the *Word of Life* is God the Son, Jesus Christ.
- Fellowship with Jesus leads to a life in fullness of joy.

1 John 1:5 – Sin and the nature of God.

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.

What does it tell us that *this is the message which we have heard from Him*?

This is a claim to authority. 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 John now reveals to us.

- 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.

What does it tell us that *God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*?

We must begin our understanding of God that He is light; it is He who illuminates the truth. And no darkness means...

Hebrews 6:18 – *it is impossible for God to lie*

What does it tell us that *God is light and in Him is no darkness at all in the context of fellowship with Him*?

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 implication that God might be wrong is blasphemy contradicting what is stated here.

1 John 1:6 – Our relationship with God.

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

What does it mean to say *that we have fellowship*?

This is a *false claim* to fellowship.

- It is possible for someone to *think* they have a relationship with God that they do not have.
- It is possible for a Christian to know they are saved, yet not live in true fellowship with God.

How is it that Christians out of fellowship with God *walk in darkness*?

This refers to a *pattern* of living. This does not speak of an occasional lapse, but of a lifestyle of darkness.

What is a lifestyle of darkness?

This is living like someone who does not know Jesus as their Savior.

What are Christians effectively doing who have a lifestyle of darkness?

They lie and do not practice the truth: Since God has *no darkness at all* (1 John 1:5), if one claims to be in *fellowship* with God yet lives like anyone else who does not know God, they are living a lie.

- The issue here is *fellowship*, not *salvation*.
- But the danger is in persisting in this condition... are you really sure you were saved to begin with?

How can we be so certain that Christians living outside of fellowship with God are living a lie?

The Apostle John is speaking here in terms of things being *true* or being *lies*.

- John sees things much more clearly than our culture, which doesn't see anything in black or white, but in a pale shade of gray instead.

- The modern world often thinks in terms of “my truth” in an individualistic sense. John focused on the idea of God’s truth, which is ultimate truth.

1 John 1:7 – The blessing of 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.

What does it mean to walk in the light?

This means to live a life generally obedient to God, without harboring known sin or resisting the conviction of the Holy Spirit on a particular point.

- 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.

Does walking in the light mean living a life of sinless perfection?

We know that on this side of our resurrection, *sinless perfection* is not possible. Yet we can still **walk in the light**, so this does not mean perfect obedience.

Why is the Christian life described as walking?

This implies *activity*. Christian life feeds upon contemplation, but it displays itself in action...

- “Walking” implies action, continuity, and progress.
- Since God is active & walking, those in fellowship with Him, will also be active & walking.

What is the result of walking in the light?

We have fellowship with one another: We would have expected John to say, “We have fellowship with God.”

- The idea of walking together with God is walking in the light has already been established.
- The point is that Christians who walk in the light will also enjoy fellowship with each other.

What does it mean if Christians do not have fellowship with each other?

Then one party or both 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.

Why are we reminded here that *the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*?

As we *walk in the light* we also enjoy the continual cleansing of Jesus.

- This is another indication that sinless perfection is not meant by walking in the light; otherwise, there would be no sin to cleanse in this ongoing sense.

Why do we need continual cleansing of sin?

Because we still have a sin nature and will continually sin and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

- Even though Christians have been cleansed in an important general sense, our “feet” need cleaning (John 13:10).

What does it tell us that the verb form used in *cleanses us from all sin* is in the present 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*.

What is it that *cleanses us from all sin*?

The blood of Jesus Christ: 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.

Why is the shed blood of Christ so important for the forgiveness of sins?

God is serious about the consequences of sin having instituted the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law which all point to Christ...

Hebrews 9:22 – *without shedding of blood there is no remission* [of sins]

Why is being forgiven by God more than just the *guilt of sin* but also the *stain of sin*?

Because the stain of sin hinders our continual relationship with Him.

Does my walking in the light take away my sins?

Not at all. I am as much a sinner in the light as in the darkness, if it were possible for me to be in the light without being washed in the blood.

- No one can have fellowship with God unless their sin has been taken away.
- It is the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.

What does it mean that we are cleansed from *all sin*?

The sin nature we inherited from Adam along with the sin we committed before becoming Christians and the sin we committed after as well.

Does this mean that Christians have a license to sin?

Romans 6:1-2 – *Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*

While we still have our sin nature, we should no longer want to grieve the Holy Spirit by giving in to it.

- We will strive to be more like Christ out of gratitude for what He has done for us.

Are there other ways to have fellowship with God beyond being cleansed by the blood of Christ?

No...

- Not through philosophical speculation.
- Not through intellectual education.
- Not through drugs or entertainment.
- Not through scientific investigation.

You can *only* come to fellowship with God by dealing with your sin problem through the blood of Jesus.

What sin is not forgiven by the blood of Christ?

The *only* sin that cannot be cleansed by the blood of Jesus is the sin of continuing to reject that blood as payment for sin.

1 John 1:8-10 – The Confession of 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.

Can the Christian be completely without sin?

No... we can walk in the light and be cleansed from sin. But no mortal can become sinlessly perfect.

To *think* we can be sinless is to *deceive ourselves* thus revealing that *the truth is not in us*.

Should we think of ourselves as sinners?

Yes... that is simply admitting reality and continually acknowledging our need for a Savior.

- Few people 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.”

Why is it dangerous to say that we have no sin?

This is spiritually dangerous because God’s grace and mercy is extended to *sinners*, not to those who consider themselves generally good with a few flaws.

What should we do when we find ourselves sinning?

We should confess them before God and repent. We should not allow our sin to be a hindrance to our relationship with God.

- 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.

What does it tell us that the verb translated confess here is 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.

Should we confess our sin to a priest in a confessional?

No... believers are our own priests able to go directly to God. Jesus Christ is the only mediator.

- Hebrews 4:16 encourage approaching “*the throne of grace*” with confidence
- Ephesians 2:18 states that through Jesus, we both have access by one Spirit to the Father

How should we view the role of the two biblical ordinances in confession of sin?

- Baptism is a one-time public confession of sin acknowledging our need to be cleansed and reborn.
- In communion, we confess our sin saying we need the work of Jesus on the cross to take our sin away.

Are our sins forgiven because we confess?

If this were the case then we would all be condemned 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.

So, what role does confession have in our relationship with Jesus?

Confession is vital to maintain our *relationship* with God. As God convicts us of sin that is hindering our fellowship with Him, we must confess it to receive forgiveness and cleansing for our relationship with Him to continue.

How should our confession to God be personal?

To say, “God, if we have made any mistakes, forgive us” isn’t confession, because it isn’t being personally convicted of anything.

- Also, it isn’t *specific* (saying “if we made *any*”)
- And it isn’t *honest* (saying “mistakes”).

What does it tell us that God is *faithful and just to forgive us*?

Because of Jesus’ work, the righteousness of God is our *friend* — insuring 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.
- If we treat God truthfully, He will treat you truthfully
- Lay bare your soul before God, and He will be faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

What does a flippant attitude about sin reveal?

There is no *more sure* evidence that a person is out of fellowship with God than for someone to dismiss sin with the idea, “I can just ask for forgiveness later.”

What does it say about a Christian who denies they have sinned?

They are self-deceived and are denying God’s Word.

- Yet, though sin is always present, so is its remedy; so sin need never be a hindrance to our relationship with God.

What does it mean that *His word is not in us*?

This is related to the idea that Jesus is *the Word of life* (1 John 1:1); if we refuse to see sin in us, we show that Jesus is not in us.

- No man was ever kept out of God’s kingdom for his confessed badness; many are for their supposed goodness.

What applications do we see from this discussion?

- It is Christ’s shed blood alone that enables our sins to be forgiven.
- Mortal Christians must recognize our sin nature keeps us from fellowship with God.
- God wants us to confess our sin so that it does not become a hinderance to our relationship with Him.