



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN 1:6-7- FALSE CLAIM #1: RIGHTEOUSNESS!

COLORADO

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John writes to protect believers from error. He was passionate for the truth and equally passionate in his opposition to error. So after giving truth about Christ, he proceeds to the accurate belief in the nature of God the Father.¹ In 1 John 1:5, we have one of the most comprehensive statements about God. This is important because a thrust of the false teaching in that day, and in ours, was that it didn't matter how you lived as long as you believed in God. But the God of the gospel brings us to know the God Who is light and "in Him there is no darkness at all." There were those who believed and taught that God and sin could exist equally and sin was okay.² As believers, we fall short of God's holiness; we must have a desire for righteousness instead of a disregard for it. We have as our aim to strive for holiness and walk in the light. John will continue with three false claims regarding sin and righteousness. Since God is light, and holy, is your passion in this life to please Him with a godlike desire for purity?

I. 1 JOHN 1:6-7- FALSE CLAIM #1- RIGHTEOUSNESS!

"And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." 1John 1:5-7

Ever since the fall of man, we have tried to minimize the reality of sin. We redefine sin; we messed up, we failed but we really do not hit the nail on the head. The church no longer likes to talk about sin for fear of offending. There is the well-accepted notion that all people are good. But Scripture teaches the opposite, that all are sinful at the very core. That is what drove Christ to the cross. Sin may be culturally accepted but it is never acceptable in God's sight. We cannot excuse sin. All must accept the holiness of God and accept full responsibility for their sin individually and that God has the right to judge. John unmasks those who deny sin or excuse sin and thereby sidestep their own responsibility for it...or its consequences.³

As John highlights God's absolute moral purity, he in turn uses this to refute three false claims held by those who think they have fellowship with God yet are deceived. Evaluate your life and take these three tests to consider the genuineness of your faith in Christ His Son. One's verbal profession does not mean a true confession. Profession must be tested and as John says, tested by behavior. These misconceptions come as folks want fellowship with God on easy terms. And so while John denounces sin, he continues to offer the Divine remedy

offered by God through the cleansing and forgiveness made possible through the death of Christ. Christianity is the only religion that insists first on taking sin seriously and then offers a solution to the problem of sin. The only way to have fellowship with God is not to deny sin, but confess sin.⁴

A. "IF WE SAY WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM AND YET WALK IN DARKNESS"- 1 JOHN 1:6A

John now identifies himself with believers, rather than the Apostles, as he writes, "If we say". Therefore, the first false claim John makes is the assertion that we can have fellowship with God, while at the same we walk habitually in darkness.

"to walk" Greek "peripateo" used figuratively of a manner of life, conduct, habitually live, present tense verb indicates a continual practice.

Therefore, to walk in darkness or sin, indicates a continual, habitual practice of that which is opposed to God. It is a shared life with darkness and sin rather than with God Himself. It is to live outside of the revelation of God's character and will in Scripture. (John 3:19-20)

The proof of being a Christian is found by the life one leads. This does not necessarily just mean living in sin; but also to live without reference to the will of God, to live according to the worldly standards, to seek selfish goals and to exclude Christ and a life of submission to Him. This makes our fellowship with God impossible.⁵

So John denies the erroneous assertion that applies to anyone who claims to know God, while at the same time treats sin and morality lightly. Believing the right thing is no substitute for living the right thing. Psalm 51:6 talks about what God seeks and that is truth in the inward being and not an outward show. When that is present, it will be obvious in all areas of life. So, John says that those who habitually walk in darkness instead of the light, are in darkness. Romans 6:2 begs the question of how should we who have died to sin still live in sin?

B. "WE LIE AND DO NOT PRACTICE THE TRUTH"- 1 JOHN 1:6B

Can I have fellowship with God and live however I please? This exposes a life that has never understood the gospel. To say you are a Christian and yet walk in darkness is a "lie". To profess one thing and then live in contradiction to it is to lie and not practice the truth. John asserts clearly that anyone

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who claims to be a believer and yet lives habitually in sin, practicing sin, is not actually saved.⁶

C. “BUT IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT”- 1 JOHN 1:7A

Having refuted the error, John now affirms a complimentary truth. He has given the consequences of “walking in the darkness” and now describes what happens if we “walk in the light”. It is not “if we say we walk” but rather if we actually do “walk in the light.” Walking in the light describes absolute sincerity without hypocrisy.⁷ (Philippians 1:10) True Christians will not be able to ignore sin in their life. The genuineness of our faith will be evaluated by how we live and our love for godliness. And keep in mind, this does not mean John is talking about perfection. Rather a genuine and continuous pursuit of holiness and godliness. This must characterize all who know God and have fellowship with Him.⁸

D. “WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER”- 1 JOHN 1:7B

As we walk in the light, living lives shaped by Jesus Christ, we actually have fellowship with God Himself. And yet, here John jumps to the shared life of fellowship we also have with one another as a result. While walking in darkness prevents fellowship with God, an opposite truth is that if we walk in the light we not only have fellowship with God but that flows in to a shared life with believers in Christ. And that we must come to value and never separate ourselves from one another.

E. “AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS HIS SON CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SIN.”- 1 JOHN 1:7C

So the first false claim John highlights is to say that sin is a matter of no consequence, that people can live without regard to the will of God and still enjoy fellowship with God. Yet some of the greatest saints have been most painfully aware of their sin. Think of Paul. But we must realize that to live willfully apart from the fellowship of God is to cut oneself off from God’s restoring and forgiving grace found in Jesus Christ. (Matthew 6:12-15) This is a glorious truth, that “Jesus, His Son” through His sin bearing sacrifice, not only affects our

forgiveness but also washes that stain of our sin away. This is an amazing truth, reassuring truth. Jesus came to cleanse and deliver us from our sins, not to just leave us in them.⁹

“cleanses” Greek “katharizei” means pure, to cleanse free from filth, used in a moral sense, present active indicative keeps cleansing continuously.

The verb “cleanses” suggests that God does more than forgive. He erases even the stain of sin in or lives. With the present tense verb, John shows this is a continuous process of sanctification. To walk in the light is to continually confess sin present in our life. To walk in darkness is to ignore or deny sin. Yet to walk in purity and godliness, we can be assured that God has made provision for us as we walk in the light. This provision is the “blood of Jesus Christ His Son”. And the efficacy of this death for our sins is due to the unique Person of Christ Whom John has written of in these first few verses, *both man and God*. The condition for receiving cleansing through the blood of Christ, and enjoying fellowship with God and His people is to walk in the light, sincere, open, honest and transparent.¹⁰

Those who walk in the light will find the “blood of Christ”, the Divine remedy, available for continued cleansing and forgiveness for any sin. Such forgiveness is provided for by the sacrifice of Christ.

Thus, righteousness is the first test of genuine faith in Christ and still the test of the truth and reality of our Christian profession. God and sin are mutually exclusive. God is light, and those who truly know God will walk in the light. (1 John 1:7) And thus John exposes this first contradiction expressed by those who claim to know Christ but the habit of their life reveals a different reality. John cares about his readers and does not want anyone to be deceived about the condition of their souls. Please take time to evaluate your life. It is for eternity sake. Nothing is more important. You will not be able to sidestep your responsibility for sin or the consequences.

¹ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg.22.

² Hamilton, Ian, *Let's Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg.6-7.

³ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg.25.

⁴ Stott, John R., *The Epistles of John*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, 1964, Pg.72-74.

⁵ Erdman, Charles R., *The General Epistles: An Exposition*. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, PA, 1919. Pg. 118.

⁶ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg.28.

⁷ Stott, John R., *The Epistles of John*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, 1964, Pg.74.

⁸ Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg. 31.

⁹ Hamilton, Ian, *Let's Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg.7.

¹⁰ Stott, John R., *The Epistles of John*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, 1964, Pg.75-76.