



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

If We Say... (1 John 1:5-10)

FEBRUARY 5, 2013

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, February 5, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, February 5, 8:30 PM in Office #301**
(Speaker Pro-Tem's office)

The mission of Capitol Commission is to carry out the Great Commission in the Capitol community. We are not a lobbying group trying to garner votes; we do not strive for changes in legislation but rather labor to see changes in the hearts of the legislators. We are a ministry of the church seeking to present the gospel message and help believers grow through the expository teaching of the Bible. Scripture reveals God's great concern for people, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This forms the foundation for our service to you.

INTRODUCTION

"I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God."

A.W. Tozer is echoing the teaching of the Apostle John that is found in the beginning of the Apostle's letter that is called 1 John.

John addressed the false views of the Gnostic teaching about Jesus by declaring his own eyewitness testimony that he heard, saw, observed and touched the physical human being of Jesus Christ. This was something denied by the Gnostics as they held that anything of the physical nature was bad and only things of the spiritual realm were good.

He continued his letter by making this statement about God:

1 John 1:5 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.

This image of God is found throughout the Scripture. David wrote, *The LORD is my light and my salvation* (Psalm 27:1). Another psalmist penned, *Bless*

the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great. You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering Yourself with light as with a cloak, stretching out heaven like a tent curtain (Psalm 104:1-2). Heaven is not in need of the sun or any source for illumination for the glory God Himself will provide its light (Revelation 21:23; Isaiah 60:19-20).

As seen in this short sample of passages, God is light is seen in the magnificent glory that is associated with Him. It can also be biblically understood in reference to source, revelation, and guidance.

Another symbolic use is to illustrate holiness or purity; "light symbolizes the flawless perfection of God."² The context informs us that this is John's point: God is holy and perfect. He also stated it negatively, "in Him (God) there is no darkness at all." In other words, John proclaimed that God is holy and there is no sin to be found anywhere in Him.

And it is this understanding about God that John used to undermine three wrong-headed views that were being taught by the false teachers in his day. These teachers were proclaiming "imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God" and thus "errors in doctrine and a failure in applying Christian ethics" abounded. Unfortunately, remnants of these false teachings are still around in the 21st century, as well.

1 John 1:6-10 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; ⁷but 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. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. ³

I CAN SIN ALL I WANT--WRONG (1:6-7)

The first wrong view is quite common: It holds that a person can have a close, abounding relationship with God while his or her life is characterized by unrighteous living. John stated it as "we SAY we have fellowship (defined in the last study as a relationship which works together toward a common

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, OFFICE #301

TRUMAN BUILDING: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, 4TH FLOOR CAFETERIA

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goal while truly having a concern and love for those in this relationship) and yet WALK in darkness..." (emphasis mine).

To WALK in darkness is to be in a continual pattern of sinful behavior. It is true that all people sin, including those who have been redeemed by God. John is talking about those who habitually sin⁴ and take lightly the need to live a life of holiness which is pleasing to God. They care not for becoming more like Christ and less like the world. They live as they please in accord to their sinful desires; while at the same time saying they are in right relationship with God.

John simply stated that these people lie and do not practice the truth. They are living in a state of falsehood. They may actually be sincere and have some type of reason for believing this, but they are still sincerely wrong. It is not our prerogative to declare what our relationship with God will look like.

Instead, John said that we should "walk in the Light" (1:7). This walk is not one of perfection (for we will never be perfect on earth), but a walk in a direction. It is a pattern of living a life of holiness which is a reflection of God who has saved us.

1 Peter 1:14-16 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY".

For those who walk in light (and not just claim it), there is a true fellowship with others who are walking in the light. This is the second time John has discussed this relationship in his letter (1 John 1:3).

There is also forgiveness of sins because of the work of redemption through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. John is not saying that you must "walk in the light" to receive or qualify for this cleansing. He is teaching a promise that when one who "walks in the light" sins, there remains a cleansing. God knows that His people will not live perfect lives (look at the Apostle Paul's confession in Romans 7:14-24), so He provides a continual restoration.

But for those who live a pattern of disobedience and rebellion toward God, there is no such promise; even if they say they have fellowship with Him. They are simply liars.

I DO NOT SIN--WRONG (1:8-9)

The second wrong view comes from those who say "we have no sin." By itself, this could have numerous meanings. James Boice noted a few ideas that still have some traction today. One is the idea that there is no such thing as "sin".⁵ Modern pop psychology has all but thrown out the concept of sin and guilt; along with personal responsibility. Another, which can be found in the theology of a few church groups, is the idea that one can no longer sin if they have received the Holy Spirit; therefore, they have no sin. It seems best to understand the second of these choices as what John is confronting.

The first wrong view from this passage was that one can live in continual sin and still be right with God. The second wrong view is the total opposite; it says one can no longer sin if he or she is right with God. Those who hold the first, John called liars. Those who hold the second view, John said are deceiving themselves.

"THE GOSPEL IS THE FACT THAT GOD KILLED HIS SON INSTEAD OF KILLING YOU." --DR. DANIEL AKIN

And why is this so serious? "The seriousness of the matter emerges in the fact that if a person believes himself not to sin, he therefore excuses his sinful deeds and does not bring them to God for confession and cleansing."⁶ And if there is no confession (which implies repentance), there is no chance at forgiveness.

Instead, John taught that one should confess their sin to God (1:9). In essence, confession is agreeing with God concerning the state of one's action. When one commits a sinful act, confession is acknowledging God's decree that that act is a sin. True confession also implies repentance; a turning from that sin and a turning to God (Isaiah 45:22; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30). I. Howard Marshall wrote, "To confess sins is not merely to admit that we are sinners, but to lay them before God and to seek forgiveness."⁷ A prime example is found in the calling of Isaiah the prophet. In Isaiah 6, he sees the glory of the LORD, high and exalted—reminiscent of John's comment "God is light." When exposed to the greatness and glory of God, Isaiah cried out "Woe is me, for I am ruined! I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5).

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Psalm 51 is a confession song/prayer to God from King David after Nathan the prophet confronted him about his adulterous affair with Bathsheba. An excerpt from this Psalm also show David's confession and repentance.

Psalm 51:3-10 For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom. Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

With confession comes a great promise. One does not have to worry about going to God to confess sin only to find an angry unforgiving judge. Instead, John wrote that one will find a God who is faithful and just to forgive. This promise is loaded with good news.

God is faithful. He has promised to forgive and He has shown His willingness to forgive when His people confess. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God stated, *I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more* (Jeremiah 31:34; cf. Isaiah 1:18). In the life of Jesus, one can see a willingness to forgive sins (Mark 2:5; Luke 7:48). This faithfulness is also supported by the truth about God stated earlier by John: God is light and in Him there is no darkness. If God was unfaithful and He broke promises, darkness would blemish and turn out His light.

God is also just. But how can God be just and forgive a person of their sin? An earthly judge would be considered unjust and run out of town if he pronounced a murderer (who pleaded guilty and all evidence proved it), "not guilty" and let him walk. God would also be considered unjust if he just let sinners confess their sins and declared them not guilty. A penalty must be paid for a crime committed.

And the Apostle Paul explained how this can be done. In Romans 3:26, Paul stated that God was "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." There was a penalty paid for sins. It was the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the

Son of God, which paid the penalty for the sins of people. The "propitiation" or the satisfaction for the certificate of debt (Colossians 2:14) was the life and death of Jesus (Romans 3:21-26). God can be just in forgiving sin because the penalty was paid by His very own Son. Daniel Akin stated, "The Gospel is the fact that God killed His Son instead of killing you." No wonder God's grace is so amazing.

And just what is forgiveness? It means "...that He (God) no longer holds people's sins against them; He cancels their 'debt' (cf. Matthew 6:19-25; 18:21-35). God's purifying them 'from all unrighteousness' means that He removes the defilement which their sins had produced."⁸

Psalm 32:1-2 How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

I HAVE NEVER SINNED--WRONG (1:10)

The first false view says that I can live in my sin and still be right with God. The second false view is that I do not sin. The third view may be the most serious. It is the view that one has never sinned.

This is such a blatantly wrong statement that John goes beyond calling the man who says this, a liar (even though he is) and even saying this man is deceiving himself. John stated that this man calls God a liar. The person who makes such an outlandish claim is going contrary to what God has stated since the fall of man. In Genesis, God saw that "the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil" (Genesis 6:5) and so He sent the flood. The Psalmist wrote that "there is no one who does good" and that "they have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does what is good, not even one" (Psalm 14:1b, 3; cf. Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10-18). The Apostle Paul wrote that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

So the bottom line is: Who is telling the truth? God? Or the man who says that he has never sinned? There is only one answer: "Let God be found true, though every man be found a liar..." (Romans 3:4).

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CONCLUSION

The next two verses, 1 John 2:1-2, give the concluding thoughts for this section. But they are so packed with good news that we must separate them out so this does not become a 10 page treatise.

Because God is light (holy and pure) darkness has no place in Him. And that includes those who make the wrong-headed claims examined in 1 John 1. Now maybe, we would never say these things, but do our actions show something else? Are we deluded into thinking that sin is not that big of a deal and so we dabble in it? Have our hearts and consciences been so seared that we do not recognize our sins and still think we are right before God?

The one who is truly in the light have a growing desire for God Himself and the things that please Him. Those who only make these claims and live according to their sinful desires, do not have Him but have “*imperfect and ignoble thoughts*” about Him.

John’s response to ignoble thoughts and erroneous actions is in our passage: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Through Christ, God can truly forgive all your sins--are you interested?

¹ A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1961), 2.

² I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 109.

³ All Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible updated edition.

⁴ What is “sin”? In essence, “sin” is any disobedience to the expressed commands of God. It may concern committing an act which God has said “thou shalt not...” It may be neglecting an action that God has said should be done. Sometimes they are referred to as “acts of commission” and “acts of omission”. WE ARE NOT IN POSITION TO DECIDE WHAT IS RIGHT OR WRONG—THAT IS GOD’S PEROGATIVE. We have been called to be obedient. Much more can be stated and fleshed out concerning the meaning of sin and what is sin, but I hope this short statement is helpful for the current discussion.

⁵ James M. Boice, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1979), 32.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Marshall, 113.

⁸ Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John* The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 69.