

“Of God and Sin”

May 17, 2015

1 John 1:5-10

I. Introduction

Seventy years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, people, including some Christians, had begun changing the descriptions of God and Jesus Christ and even sin. Like the churches addressed in [Revelation 2 & 3](#), they had lost their first love and were allowing worldliness and false doctrines in. This was happening even while the Apostles were still alive and preaching the Gospel. It shouldn't surprise anyone that the same attacks and attitudes are prevalent today. They have been around forever—Isaiah wrote about such people back in [Isaiah 5:20](#), “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness.”

The devil has managed to keep some Christians quiet with misunderstandings of words like gentleness, meekness, and anger. Gentleness and meekness don't mean a Christian must “*roll over and play dead*” when confronted with something that goes against God's Word. In [Matthew 11:29](#) Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart.” In the KJV He is called meek instead of gentle, but two times Jesus drove the money changers and merchants from the Temple in Jerusalem (once early in His ministry with a whip in [John 2:12-16](#) and, later, in [Mark 11:15-17](#) during Passion Week). He didn't just shake His head and walk away—He called sin sin. Some teach that Christians should not be angry, but [Ephesians 4:26](#) says, “In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.” Even Jesus got angry, turn to [Mark 3:1-5](#). There are times every Christian needs to call “*a spade a spade*” and not just mumble under his or her breath and shuffle away.

The Apostle John was called the “beloved disciple,” but you may remember that in [Mark 3:17](#) Jesus called John and his brother James “the Sons of Thunder.” As a Son of Thunder, in today's Scripture, John showed how one can distinguish true believers from counterfeit ones as he reminds and reteaches Christians—his “dear children”—about the nature of God and sin.

II. The Nature of God: God is Light – God is the source of Light

John wrote, “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” Moses saw God as light in the burning bush in [Exodus 3](#). When leading the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land in the night, God would lead with a pillar of fire/light ([Exodus 13:21](#)). In [Psalm 4:6](#) David wrote, “Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD.” In [Psalm 27:1](#) we read, “The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear?” As

well as *being* light, God is the source of the believer's light—John 1:9 says, “The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.” In John 8:12 Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Later in John 12:36 Jesus said, “Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.”

“God is light” reveals several things about God. First, light speaks of the radiance, the glory, the beauty and the wonders of God. Second, light speaks of the purity and righteousness of God. Third, light speaks of virtue and moral conduct—turn to Ephesians 5:8-9.

John and Paul are both saying that if truth and righteousness are not seen in a person's life, that that person, no matter what he or she says, does not possess eternal life. 1 Peter 1:15 says, “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.” This doesn't mean that a believer must to be perfect—we all fall short of the glory of God. Turn to Philippians 3:12-14. A believer must desire and continually strive towards the truth and righteousness of God.

III. False Believers versus True Believers

John then compared characteristics of false believers and true believers and their response to sin. Light produces life and growth and beauty in the natural world and in the spiritual world, but sin is darkness and death. Darkness and light cannot exist in the same place. Turn to John 3:19-21. In 1st John, John highlighted 3 characteristics of false believers, those who reject the light and truth, with the words “if we claim.”

A. False believers

1. They walk in darkness. In 1 John 1:6 John wrote, “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.” This is the first characteristic of false believers—they walk in darkness. Those who walk in darkness are more comfortable with sinners than they are with Christians. They “claim to have fellowship with” God, i.e. they claim to be Christians, but they “walk in the darkness” or as Paul wrote in Romans 8:4, they “live according to the sinful nature” not according to the Spirit. James 1:26 says, “If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.” John is saying that no one who claims to be a Christian and yet lives in darkness, i.e. they continually practice evil deeds, is actually saved. Such a person is lying when he says he is a follower of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 7:20 Jesus said, “By their fruit you will recognize them.”

2. They deceive themselves. In verse 8 John wrote, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” More than just “walking in darkness,” false believers deceive themselves when they say that they are “without sin.” Any so-called Christian who claims to have

reached a higher spiritual plane where sin no longer exists in his life—that he has “made it”—is mistaken. John said that the truth is not in them—they are liars. Since Jesus is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6), John is saying that those who claim they are without sin don’t have Jesus Christ in them. They are not saved. Jesus was the only human who could ever claim to be without sin (Hebrews 4:15). It’s not until believers are glorified in heaven that the sanctification process will be complete and then they will be without sin.

3. They call God a liar. The third characteristic is found in verse 10, “If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.” There are those who say that everything is relative—there are no absolutes; therefore, there is no sin. But Romans 6:23 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” For false believers or even nonbelievers to claim they have never sinned, John says they make God a liar. Since they claim to never have sinned, they deny the need of a Savior. They slander Jesus’ sacrifice for the world! They are not true believers; they do not have eternal life.

B. True Believers

1. They have been cleansed. There is a common thread to these 3 characteristics—dishonesty. False believers are dishonest concerning sin in their lives and in the supposed relationship they have with God. In Proverbs 28:13 God warned, “He who conceals his sins does not prosper.” In Ezekiel 18:20 God said, “The soul who sins is the one who will die.” By comparison, true believers are honest with themselves and with God—like the tax collector in Luke 18:13, they cry, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” The promise of the Gospel is the free and gracious forgiveness of sin—Hebrews 10:17 says, “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”

True believers are cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ. John wrote in verse 7, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” Being cleansed from sin, the true believer walks in the light, i.e. walks as God would have him walk. Also, as we saw last week, as a member of God’s family, he or she will have fellowship with other believers. Their love for God will bind them together.

Confession of sin is absolutely necessary for salvation—for walking in the Light—in Mark 1:15 Jesus said, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.” The salvation cleansing John described covers all the sinner’s transgressions, past and future, and depends on no condition but God’s grace-- 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” Ephesians 1:7 says, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in

accordance with the riches of God's grace.” The true believer has been cleansed by the atonement of Jesus Christ for him or her.

2. Second, true believers are confessing people. If a Christian is truthful to himself, he recognizes that he still sins—Paul put it this way in **Romans 7:15**, “**I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.**” But as a Christian grows in his walk with the Lord, he will see the sins he commits and want to confess them. By walking in the light, we are able to see the “dirt” in our lives and deal with it immediately. This is what Jesus tried to teach the disciples when He washed their feet in **John 13**—He said in **John 13:10**, “**A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean.**” This is why John wrote in **1 John 1:9**, “**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**”

To “confess” sins means more than simply to “admit” to sinning. The word “confess” actually means “to say the same thing (about).” To confess sin, then, means to say the same thing about sin that God says about it. It means to agree that it is a transgression of His law and a violation of His will and that the one confessing seeks to eliminate it from his or her life. True believers are confessing people. The more believers grow in their Christian walk, the greater their hatred of sin becomes and the deeper their confession. As he was nearing the end of his life, Paul, as a devout and dedicated Christian, wrote in **1 Timothy 1:15**, “**Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst.**”

3. Finally, true believers are conquering people. Turn to **Romans 6:12-14**. With the power of the Light in their lives, Christians are not mastered by sin. **Romans 8:37** says, “**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**” True believers are conquering people. John wrote in **1 John 2:1**, “**My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.**” John wrote to encourage Christians to flee temptation and live lives that were conquering sin. True believers are people who have been cleansed from all sin, but yet feel its presence in their lives and are quick to confess their sins and, by the power of the new life in the Holy Spirit, are able to conquer temptation.

IV. Conclusion

It was said earlier, but it bears repeating: *Light produces life and growth and beauty, but sin is darkness; and darkness and light cannot exist in the same place.* If we are walking in the light, the darkness has to go. If we are holding to sin, then the light goes. There is no middle ground, no vague “gray” area, where sin is concerned! Don’t be like the false believer, the unbeliever who lies about his sin and continues to walk in darkness as if he is walking in the light. A person walking in sin cannot have fellowship with God. David wrote in **Psalms 66:18**, “**If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord**

would not have listened.” Even worse than lying to others is lying to yourself. When you get to the place where you say you have no sin in your life, there is no truth in you at all—as 1 John 1:10 says, “God has no place in your life.”

As a Christian who is walking in fellowship with God, be aware of any sin in your life and confess it as soon as possible. Agree with God that it is sin and covenant with Him that, with the power of the Holy Spirit, you will not go after that sin again. Instead with the power of the Holy Spirit you will conquer the temptation to sin that comes your way— David wrote in Psalm 55:22, “Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.” Or as John wrote in 1 John 5:4, “For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.” Trust God as Paul wrote in Philippians 4:13, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” Are you a false believer or a true believer? What do your actions and thoughts say? Are you a confessing Christian? A Conquering Christian?