



1 JOHN: Light . Life . Love

Walking in the Light

1 John 1:5-22

**In Jesus Christ God has revealed Himself as holy and made provision for our sin.
Our response is to walk in His holiness.**

I. Introduction: Secularism v. Jesus

"Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature."

Wayne Grudem, "Systematic Theology"

"Once upon a time, we thought there were moral universals. ... We realized that there is no cosmic moral law within us, much less in the starry skies above us. ... We concluded that all moral laws are ultimately arbitrary. They are the product of power, not reason, be it human or divine." Philip Gorski, Yale sociologist

"The late modern mind presents itself as something like this. We have come to realize that we don't need God to explain the world we see – science does that job for us. We don't need God or religion to be moral, to love and work for a better world, or to have meaning and fulfillment in life. What we need is to be free to live life as we see fit and to work together to make the world a better and more just place to live. Religion gets in the way of all this – it constrains our freedom to live as we wish and divides us so we can't work together." Tim Keller

II. The Big Lie – You Can Imagine God However You Like

The false teachers were telling the Christians that God is not like they've been told by the Apostles. Jesus Christ was not really the God-Man, who perfectly reveals God. Jesus' death was really of no special saving significance.

Influenced by an early form of Gnosticism, they viewed God as more of a "Force" (think Star Wars). Within this "Force," God was a mixture of both good and evil. Therefore, there's no need for all this talk about "sin."

In the Post-Christian West, we are living with this flavor of spirituality. It's common to hear someone say – "I'm spiritual, but not religious."

"It isn't until you come to a spiritual understanding of who you are – not necessarily a religious feeling, but deep down, the spirit within – that you begin to take control." Oprah Winfrey

"Spirituality is recognizing and celebrating that we are all inextricably connected to each other by power greater than all of us, and that our connection to the power and to one another is grounded in love and compassion. Practicing spirituality brings a sense of perspective, meaning, and purpose to our lives." Brene Brown

III. The Truth: God is Light (1 John 1:5)

Contrary to this claim about God, John says that he and the Apostles received a clear message from Jesus about God (1 John 1:5).

The metaphor of “light” refers to God’s perfect righteousness and his ethnic ethical purity. In our call to worship today from 1 Timothy, Paul says that God “lives in unapproachable light” (1 Timothy 6:16). Recognizing God’s purity and holiness, the prophet Habakkuk says to the Lord – “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.”

Jesus’ entire ministry was to glorify the One he called “holy Father” (John 17:11). Jesus spoke often of His life being given as a payment for our sin to satisfy God’s holiness and justice.

John reminds us that we simply don’t have the right before God to imagine him however we might wish. Rather, we must filter all of our concepts of God through the lens of Scripture in general and Jesus Christ in particular.

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us....Worship is pure or base as the worshipper entertains high or low thoughts of God....We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God.” A. W. Tozer, "The Knowledge of the Holy"

IV. Three Related Lies (1 John 1:6, 8, 10)

A. Sin is irrelevant (1 John 1:6)

Related lie #1: sin is irrelevant to your relationship with God. If we should even speak of something called sin, it’s of no consequence in your relationship with God. You can live however you like ... “God is love.”

John says that’s a lie! Jesus said that our sin, if left unconfessed and unchecked, would destroy us and separate us from God forever (Matthew 5:27-30, 7:21-23).

God’s commands flow out of His character. If we willingly disregard His commands, we are willingly disregarding Him!

“Sin is fundamentally a character assassination against God.” Jon Tyson

“Sin is elevating the self into the place of God and making the self the ultimate reference point of existence.” John Zizioulas, Metropolitan Bishop of Pergamon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

“Sin is not a matter of morality or conduct, but a state of orientation of a man’s entire consciousness which does not make God its center.” Arthur McGill (quoted by Sally Lloyd-Jones, Thoughts to Make Your Heart Sing)

B. I am not a sinner - I’m basically good (1 John 1:8)

There’s no such thing as sin. We’re all basically good. Whatever limitations or faults we may have are not inherent in us, but the result of something outside of us, i.e. our environment, family, society, etc.

Of course, Jesus taught us just the opposite. He said human beings are by nature “evil” (Luke 11:13) and that the origin of our sinful thoughts, impulses and actions flow from our hearts within us (Mark 7:14-23).

C. I have not sinned – denial of sinful actions (1 John 1:10)

False teachers may have been teaching you can rise above your sin through mystical or spiritual experiences. Today we simply call our sins by culturally accepted language, i.e. disease, ignorance or brokenness.

We take it upon ourselves to reject God's clear Word on an issue, and we appeal to our ultimate authority: our feelings. If we "feel" something is not sin, then we give ourselves permission to do it.

After all, God is a God of love and grace, isn't He?

"The pursuit of self-awareness, self-esteem, wholeness and wellbeing is paramount. One who fails at the project of self must gaze at the mirror and confess 'against you alone have I sinned.' The only sin of the 21st century is the failure of self-actualization." Author unknown (quoted by Jon Tyson)

V. The Gospel (1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2)

Because God is both faithful and just, He will not count our sins against us twice if we have asked Jesus to pay for them for us.

Pray Psalm 51