

## Lesson 2 – 1 John 1:5-10

Randy Thompson  
Valley Bible Church  
www.valleybible.net

### Review/Introduction

A Christian is someone who has exercised the gift of saving faith in Jesus the Christ as their Lord and Savior. Saving faith is not mere intellectual assent to facts about Jesus or the gospel. True saving faith involves repentance (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 20:20-21; Hebrews 6:1), a heart to follow Jesus (John 10:27-28), denying self (Luke 9:23-26), forsaking all (Luke 14:15-33), confessing Christ as Lord (Romans 10:8-10), and a heart attitude to obey Jesus (John 3:36).

Those who have exercised the gift of true saving faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) have been made new in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). True saving faith is a living faith, a faith that demonstrates itself true (2 Peter 1:5-11), a faith that exhibits fruit in keeping with repentance (Luke 3:8; 1 Peter 1:8-9; John 14:23; 1 John 2:3-6), a faith that works (James 2:14-26), a faith that is progressing in sanctification (Philippians 1:6). The results of true saving faith are the visible manifestations of a changed life.

John is writing a letter to believers so they (and we) might know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13), so they may know they are possessors of Christ and not just professors. He is doing this by presenting tests to determine if true saving faith has been exercised or are the readers (us) deceived. Woven into these tests is John's attack on Gnosticism which emphasized a special knowledge (gnosis), denied the deity and saving work of Jesus, and resulted in immoral lifestyles.

John presents his tests in four spirals laying out doctrinal and conduct tests or evidences of true, real, actual regeneration. Each spiral starts with a doctrinal test then presents conduct tests. The spirals all have similar topics that are expanded on and/or reiterated in each spiral.

This morning we begin by looking at the first test, a doctrinal test. This test looks at the truth of sin and how sin is dealt with. Do you hold fast to God's definition of sin and the only way of salvation? Does your life show that you believe these things about sin?

### Spiral 1 – Doctrine (Hold fast to truth) – The way of salvation from sin (1:5-2:2)

#### 1. Sin Truth – The Standard (1:5)

<sup>5</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. (ESV)

The Greek starts with an “and” at the beginning of this sentence which ties it to the previous thought. Eternal life was manifested in the eternal God-man, Christ Jesus. He is the very one the eyewitnesses had encountered as they heard (and still rang in their ears), saw (and was burned into their brain), beheld (gazed upon with wonder), and touched. He is the very one they proclaim. And this is the message they proclaim.

“Message” here simply means message or the content of what is announced. They heard this message from Christ. The word here is not the “good news”, but it is the same root word.

This context makes it clear that the gospel message is in view.

“Heard” again here means to hear with understanding and often refers to a hearing that results in a conviction of the mind that moves the person to submit/obey. The usage (perfect tense) speaks of an abiding effect, like a “ringing in one’s ears”.

This message that they heard from Christ, the one still ringing in their ears, is the one they announce. “Announce” means to bring back word and later to announce, to report, to declare or tell of things done in detail.

The message is “that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all”. The Greek reads literally, “God light is”. The Greek grammar rule (according to Kenneth Wuest) is that the absence of the definite article shows quality, nature, or essence. So, an accurate translation would be, “God as to His nature, essence, character, is light.” Therefore, the NASB capitalization of “Light” seems in error.

There are two possible non-name understandings of “light”. First is God’s glory. God’s glory is the composite of His attributes and essence; the sum total of what He is; the beauty, power, wisdom, and splendor of His character. The sum total of God’s excellencies is so magnificent that they result in an outshining, visible display of brightness that humans cannot endure.

However, the context of sin does not seem to support that idea, at least not specifically. The second, and probable, understanding is that light speaks metaphorically of God’s holiness, His moral perfection. Holiness means God is pure and separated from sin. It is not just that God cannot sin, it is that He is perfect. There is no moral defect found in Him. He is morally perfect, holy. This understanding is corroborated by the next phrase, “and in Him there is no darkness at all.” John used two negatives to emphasize the absolute moral purity of God. There is no sin in God’s presence. There was no sin in the incarnate Christ. There is no sin in the Godhead. There is no sin in those who will dwell in His presence.

Why would John begin the message that he heard from Jesus with a declaration of God’s holiness? First, in order to understand forgiveness and cleansing from sin noted later, we must understand our desperate need. Second, there is a difference between the redeemed’s view of sin and the unredeemed’s view of sin. Those that exercise true saving faith deal with sin differently than those that reject the gospel (or are deceived thinking they have fellowship with God and do not).

Here then is the first sin truth. God is morally perfect, without sin (light and no darkness at all). If you would have fellowship with God, something must be done about your sin; if you have fellowship with God, something is being done about your sin.

### ❖ **How lofty is your view of God? What is your view of your sin?**

#### 2. Sin Lie – Willful Ignorance (1:6)

<sup>6</sup>If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

---

<sup>6</sup>If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (ESV)

John first addresses the lie of false professors that a person can have union with Christ and not have a changed life. Or said differently, that they can have regeneration without the fruit that flows from regeneration.

In pastoral form, John includes himself (“we”) in the possibility of being deceived into thinking He has (or is persevering in) true salvation regardless of life demonstrations. This gives the idea that we all need to be careful that profession and practice match.

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him” places us at the first interpretive challenge of this section. In fact, our understanding of “fellowship” here determines our understanding of much of the epistle. “Fellowship” has previously (1:1-4) been used as John’s synonym for “union”. “Union” is consistent with salvation not sanctification. John uses “fellowship” in the “connectedness” meaning with respect to salvation. We see here that it is possible to claim salvation and yet not be regenerated.

<sup>46</sup>“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? (Luke 6:47)

<sup>21</sup>“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ <sup>23</sup>And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’ (Matthew 7:21-23)

If we say that we are saved and “walk in darkness” then we lie. “Walk” metaphorically refers to one’s conduct of life, habitual way or bent of life, life-style, a pattern of behavior. “Darkness” is that contrast to “light” meaning personal moral impurity or sin.

What might “walking in darkness” look like? It is living without regard for God, as if God is irrelevant. It is living with little to no thought of God and if He is thought about the thoughts are incorrect. It is living with little to no thought of God’s will, His glory, or dependence on Him. Walking in darkness is walking in selfishness and the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. It is living unthankful to the Creator. It is living independent of the connectedness to the body of Christ

#### ❖ **Are any of the walking in darkness characteristics present in your life?**

So, saying you are regenerate (have fellowship with God) and walking in sin (darkness) as a habitual pattern of life are incongruous. The two are not be compatible.

We find that “saying” and “doing” are connected. The two should line up. If they do not line up, then you are lying. For the regenerate, the ever-increasing habitual pattern of life should be to practice the truth. “Practice” means to do or accomplish with the present tense meaning continuously. “Truth” means that which is not hidden, that which corresponds to reality.

The bottom line here is that the walk must match the doing as an increasing pattern of life or we do not have confidence that regeneration has truly taken place.

<sup>26</sup>For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup>but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:26-27)

#### ❖ **Are there areas of your life that you “walk” in darkness (anger, lust, speech, etc.)?**

### 3. Sin Truth – Walking Demonstrates Cleansing (1:7)

<sup>7</sup>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.

---

<sup>7</sup>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 cleanses us from all sin. (ESV)

Walking (as a habitual pattern of life) in darkness is a characteristic of the unregenerate. Conversely, walking in the light demonstrates regeneration. Walking in the light does not obtain regeneration, but is a characteristic of the regenerate. If regeneration has occurred then some things are true.

First, if you are regenerate, you have fellowship with one another (union with other believers through Spirit baptism) and union with Christ. True fellowship cannot occur without true regeneration. Many people want to have connectedness, but true fellowship can only occur between those that are united in Christ.

Second, if you are regenerate, “the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses from all sin”. “Cleanses” means to make clean by taking away an undesirable part. It is in the present tense which indicates the continual effect of cleansing. It isn’t something that has to be repeated because it is a short-term effect. It continues throughout your life, cleansing you from all sin past, present, and future. This is why the longer you walk with Christ the more your sin is viewed more heinously.

That cleansing effect is from all sin. This is the first time that “sin” is used in the epistle. “Sin” is literally missing the mark or falling short of a standard. Sin is anything contrary to the character of God (Romans 3:23), either by commission or omission transgressing God’s word (Romans 5:15), lawlessness or rebellion (1 John 3:4), and missing the mark of perfect righteousness (Matthew 5:48). It is any departure from God’s perfect standard, His light, in thought, word, or deed.

Again, “walking in the light” does not result in fellowship and cleansing. Walking in the light demonstrates fellowship and cleansing have/are occurring.

❖ **Is walking in the light desirable for you or do you enjoy walking in darkness?**

### 4. Sin Lie – Denying Depravity is Deception (1:8)

<sup>8</sup>If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

---

<sup>8</sup>If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (ESV)

There are different ways to understand what John is saying here. However, the Greek for sin is singular and it does not have a definite article which points to John thinking of the sin nature. So, John now addresses the lie of the false professors that says that people are good; the lie that denies the sin nature. The only way someone can come to a saving knowledge of Christ is to understand their need due to their complete corruption by sin.

Sin is even worse than defined above. Sins of thought, word, or deed flow from the sin nature. Every person is born with a sin nature (original sin) that is inherited from Adam (Romans 5:12). It is the corruption of the whole nature and that which inclines to sin.

The result of the sin nature is “total depravity”, where the corruption of sin extends to every aspect of one’s being (Romans 1:18-3:20) including intellect (2 Corinthians 4:4), conscience (1 Timothy 4:2), will (Romans 1:28), and heart (Ephesians 4:18). The idea of total depravity is not that people display as much evil as they possibly could, nor that they cannot do any good, or even feign a love for God, but that their entire nature is affected by sin.

The result of sin is that we are lost, separated from God, totally incapable of moving toward Him on our own; without hope in this life and destined for hell in the next. So, all people are sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

The denial of the sin nature manifests itself by blaming other people or circumstances or causes for one’s own sin (see the Fall in Genesis 3:8-13).

Denying one’s own sin nature demonstrates deception – “we are deceiving ourselves”. “Deceive” means literally made to wander and so to go astray. The usage could be rendered more literally, “we continually lead ourselves astray”.

Also, the truth is not in this person. The phrase is used in 1 John 2:4 and speaks to the condition of the unbeliever.

<sup>4</sup>The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; (1 John 2:4)

Denying the sin nature, either actively by a verbal denial or through demonstrations of blame shifting, is a demonstration that true regeneration has not taken place.

### ❖ Do you take responsibility for your own sin?

#### 5. Sin Truth – Confession Brings Forgiveness and Cleansing (1:9)

<sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

---

<sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (ESV)

The question here is, “what is the forgiveness and cleansing that John is talking about?” We already established that the previous verse is talking about salvation. We will see later that verse 10 also speaks of salvation. So, the context of verse 9 is salvation.

Let’s look at some word usages. “Confess” means to agree with, to say the same thing, to admit. The only other time “confess” is used in 1 John it is in the sense of justification (1 John 4:3). The usage of confess indicates an ongoing, lifestyle of confession.

“Forgive” means literally to “hurl away”, “let go”, or “give up a debt.” It is used in either a clear sense of justification (Matthew 9:2; 9:5; 12:31-32; Mark 2:5-10; 4:12; 11:25; Luke 5:20-24; 7:47-49; 12:10; 23:24; John 20:23; Romans 4:7; 1 John 2:12) or in a sense that should be interpreted as justification (Matthew 6:12-14; Luke 11:4; James 5:15). There is no clear usage of the term “forgive” in a strict sense of sanctification. The only other place in 1 John where “forgive” is used is in the sense of justification (1 John 2:12).

“Cleanse” means to make clean by taking away an undesirable part. In the New Testament it is used in both a sense of justification (Matthew 23:25-26; Luke 4:27; 11:39; Acts 15:9; Hebrews 9:14; 9:22; 9:23; 1 John 1:7) and sanctification (2 Corinthians 7:1) as well as places that may be understood in either sense (Ephesians 5:26; Titus 2:14; James 4:8).

The usage for both “forgive” and “cleanse” indicate completed one-time events.

At the initial point of salvation, confession of sins is necessary (as opposed to saying you have no sin and have not sinned). If God has forgiven your sin at the point of justification, then it is impossible for your sin which is forgiven, remitted, completely removed at justification to be forgiven, remitted, completely removed a second time subsequently during your sanctification process. At salvation, God makes clean by taking away an undesirable part which is the slavery to sin (Romans 6).

The active confession of sin for the believer is related to ongoing repentance that enables being kept being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18+). But this specific verse is speaking to the lifestyle of confession beginning at salvation through which God justifies.

### ❖ **Do you confess and repent as a habitual pattern of life?**

#### 6. Sin Lie – Perfection is a Lie (1:10)

<sup>10</sup>If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

---

<sup>10</sup>If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (ESV)

John now addresses the lie of the false professors that says that that they have not sinned. This is a nuanced difference than saying “I have no sin”. “I have no sin” says I have the inherent capacity for good. Here a false professors state that they have not actually sinned. Not only do they have the capacity for good, but they actually did good.

This addresses the gnostic view that their spirit is good and flesh is evil. But today we see this kind of thought in people weighing their good and bad on a scale and if the good outweighs the bad, they think, “I haven’t sinned that badly”.

This type of thought process “makes Him a liar”. God has continually stated that there is no one who has not sinned, none who are righteous.

<sup>2</sup>And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, **For in Your sight no man living is righteous.** (Psalm 143:2)

<sup>20</sup>Indeed, **there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.** (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

<sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

“Making God a liar” is a characteristic of the unsaved. The same phrase, “make Him a liar” is repeated in 1 John 5:10 which clearly speaks of salvation.

<sup>10</sup>The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; **the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar**, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. (1 John 5:10)

The person who says they have no sin or have never sinned is a person who has yet to receive the Holy Spirit's convicting work.

<sup>8</sup>And He, when He comes, **will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;** (John 16:8)

This is the state of all people before coming into a saving relationship with Christ. The unregenerate are “dead in their trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1-3); have their minds blinded (2 Corinthians 4:4) and are held captive by Satan (2 Timothy 2:25-26); love the darkness and hate the light (John 3:19-20); are a slave to sin (John 8:33); and are “foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending their life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another” (Titus 3:3).

Not only does this idea “make God a liar”, but it demonstrates that “His word is not in us”. John speaks to this condition significantly in his gospel concerning the unsaved.

<sup>38</sup>You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. (John 5:38)

<sup>31</sup>So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

<sup>51</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death. (John 8:51)

But what about the believer? Can the believer be tempted to be so proud as to say to someone, “I didn't sin at that point in time.”? We must be careful that this unbelieving attitude does not infiltrate our thinking.

### ❖ **Are you quick to recognize your sin?**

Next time, we will look at the final sin truth, the provision for sin, in this first doctrinal test, the test of the truth of sin and how sin is dealt with.

## **Conclusion**

John is laying out tests or evidences of true, real, actual regeneration. This passage laid out the first (or maybe second) doctrinal test. Dealing biblically with the knowledge of sin. I pray that we would not be influenced by a cultural view of sin and salvation, but would hold to a biblical view of sin and salvation.

## **Additional Study**

1. Each time you come to the Scriptures, pray for the Spirit to give you understanding.
2. Read 1 John once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for five days).
3. Re-read today's passage and ask yourself what John is trying to convey.
4. Re-read the notes from today and contemplate the thought questions.
5. Pray that God would show you personal applications from this passage.