

WALKING IN THE LIGHT- First John and the Path to Living Deeply in Christ - Part three
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WALKING IN THE LIGHT

1 John 1:7-10 - “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. [8] If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [10] If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

Last week we saw there are two truths that must be confronted right from the starting block of the Christian life if fellowship with God is to be realized. John begins with these two truths because everything Christian about my life is make-believe without them:

A) FIRST, GOD IS ALWAYS HOLY AND MAKES NO PARTNERSHIP WITH WILLFUL, CONTINUED SIN

verse 5 - “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.”

He is light. There is no compromise with darkness at all. John says this is the very first thing I need to know about God. He's not just grace. He's not just mercy. He's not just celestial sweetness. He ***forgives*** sin. More yet, He ***removes and cleanses*** from sin. Still better, He helps the weak ***overcome*** sin. But He never ***tolerates*** sin. He always reacts to sin the way your body reacts to a foreign bacteria. He can't ever act differently. In a sense, He can't ***help*** reacting eternally against sin any more than the sun can help being warm.

B) SECOND, TO REALLY KNOW GOD AND HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM I MUST CONSTANTLY DEAL WITH MY SPIRITUAL DISHONESTY

verse 6 - "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."

Fellowship with God isn't just a matter of believing in **Jesus**. It's a matter of ever-increasing **honesty with myself**. I need to hear John's words in verse 6 very personally. The self-life in all of us tends to **drift**. And it takes constant attention to keep it close to God. Paul tells us if we sow to the flesh we will reap corruption. And sowing to the flesh isn't just sleeping with my neighbor's wife. It's allowing my own inward dishonesty to rule my thinking. It's claiming fellowship with God while walking in the darkness of disobedience or indifference in some corner of my life.

Periodically, as I grow in Jesus it will be necessary for the Spirit of God to talk to me about my sin. My first, unguarded reaction to that voice will almost always be the same - **denial, or at best, procrastination**. I will always work to find some reason - some excuse - some extenuating circumstance.

This is especially true - and this is what John's letter is all about - when God talks to me about **my relationship with someone else** - either a relationship with someone I've come to **cherish** but who is off limits (close ties with ungodly friends or romantic involvement with someone unsaved), **or** a relationship I've come to **resent** while God is calling me to offer grace and costly forgiveness.

And so John pleads with these people and, by the Spirit of God, with you and me, and says, **"Your fellowship with God isn't unbreakable. Don't let that tendency to put God on hold go unchallenged or you'll lose fellowship with God!"**

This subject is so important to John that he picks up on it again from different angles in the next four verses:

1) **TO WALK IN THE LIGHT THE CHRISTIAN MUST ALWAYS DEAL HONESTLY AND HUMBLY WITH HIS OWN HEART**

1 John 1:7 - "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 cleanses us from all sin."

Behold the power of this definition of fellowship with God. Fellowship with God always forces me to ***deal deeply with my own heart***. This is what the light of God does when it hits my life. God's light illuminates what was once concealed in my heart. Everything is exposed. Things that were fogged over - even from my own mind - become crystal clear and up front when I get close to God.

So I end up with this circular situation: To have fellowship with God I must walk in the light. When I walk in the light more and more of my own prejudice and wickedness gets exposed. If that isn't happening in my life I have no fellowship with God. I'm just ***talking*** about a fellowship that doesn't actually exist.

So how am I to walk in this living, percolating, fueling fellowship with God? How do I continually respond and ***involve myself*** in the life of God as it lights up my heart? Every Christian is faced with one of two choices every time he draws near to God through Christ Jesus:

A) I CAN DECIDE THAT THE PRICE FOR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IS TOO HIGH.

While those words are never actually said, many professors of religion vote this way with their hearts. Many will do it in church services today. The light of God's Spirit exposes something they love but He hates, or someone they hate but God loves. Without denying God outwardly, I can choose very discreetly to close my heart to the light. After a while I can do it without even pausing to think about it, so it doesn't even *feel* like denying God.

This quiet, inward traitorship - like Judas kissing Jesus on the cheek - is so common John takes the time to caution against it in another of his letters:

John 3:19-21 - "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. [20] For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. [21] But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God."

Here's John's test of faith. Truly Christian people grow in ***embracing what the light of fellowship with God reveals***. On the other hand, John also says professing Christians can ponder the mystery of the pagan blindness of those who reject Christ and ***do the very same thing*** when God's light shines full strength into their own lives.

O, I love God when He shines light in other areas. I love the light when it's a ***"lamp unto me feet and a light unto my path."*** I love the guidance of the Holy Spirit, helping me know where to put my feet when I need divine direction. So does everybody else. The real test comes when the light isn't

shining **outwardly** in guidance, but **inwardly** in correction. That's when people don't love the light. They **crucify** it. They stay home from church. They don't tithe. There are dozens of responses but the end result is the same.

B) THE SECOND OPTION EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS IS A VERY TENDER AND BEAUTIFUL ONE. WE CAN WALK IN THE LIGHT AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT AND BE CLEANSED AND FREED IN THE PROCESS

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 cleanses us from all sin."

What does it mean to "**walk in the light as he is in the light"(7)?** That "**he**" in the beginning of verse 7 is the same person as "**God**" in verse 5. All of the "**He's**" and "**Him's**" refer to God.

Well surely God doesn't have to come into the light by confessing His sin. He never sins. ***What does John mean? How are we to walk in the light as He is in the light?*** I think there are other verses of Scripture that give some clues as to what John has in mind.

2 Timothy 2:13 - "....if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself."

Everything in God is **consistent** with the absolute purity of His Being. Every part of His being is always and instantly moving in the same direction. He isn't holy sometimes and impure at others. ***He never acts in any way that***

doesn't fit with Who He is. He never has anything to conceal or hide. There's nothing He would ever be ashamed of. He doesn't have to ever **pretend** to be holy and pure. There's nothing in Him that would ever get the upper hand in the battle for integrity. His life is a unified whole.

"Now", John says, "you walk in the light just as He's in the light."

"Sure, John. Right. No problem. And then maybe I'll walk on water and create the heavens and earth in seven days!"

Yet, John teaches there is a more limited way we **can** walk in the light just as God is in the light. And it has to do with what I do when the closeness of my fellowship with God makes me aware of areas where His character and mine don't match. And John's promise is if I'll quickly confess and quickly yield to the Lord the dark blemishes of my soul will disappear.

I don't mean just that I'll be **forgiven**. Forgiveness is precious but nowhere near enough. John is very specific about what is offered through the power of the blood of the cross when it's applied to a heart that's committed to bring all sin into the light.

He repeats it several times for added weight:

"....the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin"(1:7).

"....If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"(1:9).

John is describing the very thing we're all after. He's putting **within** our reach

what we usually think is **out** of our reach. He's not talking about how you can have some specific sin forgiven when you feel like a miserable failure. He is talking about living in the light as **He** is in the light. This is real, ongoing, permanent transformation. This truth has to grip your **mind** before it can grip your life. The **power** and the **grip** of sin needs to be broken and **can** be broken. ***Nothing less than that is promised in these verses.***

2) **THE ONGOING POWER OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS IN MY LIFE IS DIRECTLY TIED TO THE WHOLENESS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST**

1 John 1:6-7 - "If we say we have ***fellowship with him*** while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. [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 cleanses us from all sin."

Something in the logic of those verses looks very wrong. **Verse 6** talks about the conditions necessary for ***fellowship with God***. **Verse 7** then says if we meet those conditions we end up with ***fellowship with each other***.

But why doesn't John just say the obvious? If we walk in darkness we **lose** fellowship with God. But if we walk in the light we **have** fellowship with God. That's what the verse should say. And they **would** say that if John were merely reminding us of something obvious. But John isn't trying to remind us of what we already **know**. He's warning us about something we're likely to **miss**.

I can still remember the first time I was driving home from Morden, Manitoba through Chicago. My Father-in-law gave me driving directions. He paused at one point to make sure I was listening - "Stay on #70 until you're passed the exit for the

airport. Don't turn off on #70a. It **looks** like the same highway but it **isn't**. You'll be messed up for hours if you make that mistake!"

Now there were lots of other highways **not** to take as well as that one. But he only mentioned that **one** route because that was the one spot where I was **most likely** to get tripped up.

That's exactly what John is doing here. He knows I know all about fellowship with God and the need for holiness. Even if I don't **practice** it, I **know** it. John is picking out something that is **most** likely to trip me up spiritually. He's selecting for his special attention the place where serious errors are most likely to occur. John would be shouting here - ***"Remember this! To be severed from fellowship with Christ's people - any of them - is to be severed from fellowship with Christ Himself!"***

In other words, fellowship with one another is **how** I keep walking in the light. Don't talk about walking in the light if you're not on good terms with the members of Christ's body with whom you sit and worship and sing and pray.

This is such practical truth for the church. The next time you want healing or deliverance or some answer to prayer, go to that person with whom you've been angry for six months. Get **them** to pray for you! Your chances of being healed will go up astronomically because you're walking in the light.