

A Study of 1 John
“How Do You REALLY Know that You are Walking in the Light?”
By Doug Hamilton

II. Correct Perspective of Sin

It is in our walk with Jesus that we can know that we are in fellowship with Him and that we are continually cleaned from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7). In the last lesson we covered the first of the “Lightmus” tests that John covered to determine whether someone is walking in the light or not. The walk is not necessarily defined in terms of moving the feet, but in the progression, direction and destination of the goal which is our relationship with Christ. The first “Lightmus” test is to hold a correct perspective of Jesus. We must understand that Jesus came in the flesh, is the Son of God, is the Christ and is our propitiation for our sins. In this lesson we will show that one must also hold a correct view of sin in order to know that they are walking in the light.

A) We must be in AGREEMENT with God about our sin.

1 John 1:8-10 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.
⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

- Being in true form, John takes on both sides of the Gnostic fence. To the propagators of antinomianism he dealt with in verse 8. He said that if they teach they have no sin, they are self-deceived and have not the truth in them.
- To the monastic he says in verse 10, “If you think that you have reached a point in your life that you have beaten sin and no longer do it, then you are calling Jesus a liar and His word is not in us.”
- How do they make Jesus a liar? This is because Jesus had to come and die for their sins for all the evil that they have done. For us to say that we have reached perfection is to proclaim a message that Jesus did not have to die for us. He said He did have to die for us, but the monastic said, “No, you don’t need Jesus to pay for the sins, hence a lying Jesus. We better not pretend for a moment that we will reach the point of never sinning again, for we know that we will always struggle. *1 John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins...*” We are to be present tense strugglers with sin, for that is the reality.
- The word that John used for “confess” does not mean to inform or ask for forgiveness. It is the word ὁμολογῶμεν, meaning to have the *same* (homo) word (logos). Simply and contextually put, it means to have the “same word” about our Christian sins that God has about our Christian sins.

Well, what does God say about the sins of the Christian so that we know whether or not we are in agreement with God?

- The words for forgive (ἀφῆ) and cleanse (καθαρίζω) are both aorist, meaning past puncticular action. In other words when we are in honest and humble agreement about our sins with God, He goes back in time to the point of our sin to forgive and cleanse it from our past. This is what happens when you are in fellowship with the One that stands outside of time. As long as you are willing to walk in the light with Jesus, the cleansing and forgiveness are erased from the presence of God. That has always been the message of the God concerning this.

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When we came up out of the water during our baptism, our sins were taken care through Christ.

- Colossians 2:13-14 “...He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”
- Jeremiah 31:34 “...for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (quoted in Heb 10:17)
- Ezekiel 36:26 “...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you...”
- Psalm 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
- Micah 7:19 Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.
- Isaiah 1:18 Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.
- Isaiah 43:25 “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions...”
- John 8:36 “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”
- Romans 6:18 “...and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”
- Romans 11:27 “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”
- Romans 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- 1 Pet 2:24 “...and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross.”
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature...”

That is what God is saying about the sins of the Christian and part of the “Lightmus” test is to be saying the same word that God concerning sin.

- We are not to be like the Gnostics that said they are beyond sinning or are incapable of sinning, but that we are recovering sinners thankfully cleansed by the blood of Jesus. That is what God is saying about our sins. Brothers and sisters, we will never have our joy full (1:4) if we are not in agreement with God about this.
- There are many good-hearted, well-intentioned, “walking in the light” saints that have adopted a practice of “asking God for forgiveness of their sins” for which they are already forgiven. They quote 1 John 1:9 in the attempt to prove this, stating that “confess” means to “ask God for forgiveness”. This is not the contextual nor true meaning of the word. Confess does not mean “asking God for forgiveness”. John uses this word *confess* throughout his letter, being the same word and meaning the *same word*, yet we would never say it meant to “ask for the forgiveness of sins.”
 - 1 John 2:23 “...the one who confesses (ὁμολογῶμεν) the Son (asks God for the forgiveness of the Son???)
 - 1 John 4:2 “...every spirit that confesses (ὁμολογῶμεν) that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (asks God for forgiveness for Jesus coming in the flesh???)
 - 1 John 4:15 Whoever confesses (ὁμολογῶμεν) that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God (asks Jesus for the forgiveness of being the Son of God???)
- John was writing to CHRISTIANS who had been forgiven of the sins and were walking in the light, not to an unforgiven people walking in darkness. This not something that was necessarily

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learned from the Bible, but passed down from false doctrine of men, from Catholicism to Calvinism.

- There are those in the brotherhood that might be reading this and are deeply disturbed by the thought. Some might be thinking that the writer is overconfident and possibly prideful. Yet others might be making the accusation of teaching “Once Saved Always Saved”. Let me be clear...I AM NOT TEACHING OVERCONFIDENCE nor ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED, for those are clearly false teachings concerning the Bible. What I am communicating is a message of biblical consistency about assurance in salvation. When we make it a habit of “asking God for forgiveness” in lieu of humility, repentance and thankfulness concerning our sin, we are potentially robbing ourselves of the joy that God wants in our hearts and minds.
- Let me ask, if a Calvinist proposed to you that the Bible teaches a person becomes a Christian by simply asking for forgiveness, would you not ask them to base it in the Bible? I am persuaded that one would come up short in the scriptures if challenged on this.
 - What if a Calvinist in teaching the sinner’s prayer quoted *Matthew 6:12* ‘*And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*’ Would you not respond that Jesus was requiring us to be forgiving of others and NOT teaching the plan of salvation? Did Jesus not emphasize this at the end of the prayer? (Mt 6:14-15)
 - What if the Calvinist quoted you *Acts 8:22* in defense of the “request of forgiveness”? “*Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.*” Would you not be quick to point out that Simon the sorcerer had a corrupted heart in need of repentance? He was clearly in the practice of sin (1John 3:9). Is this passage really teaching us how to be forgiven of our sins?
 - What if the Calvinist quoted you *Psalms 51:9* *Hide Your face from my sins And blot out all my iniquities?* Would you not remind them that David had fallen from grace in his adulterous and murderous relationship with Bathsheba? Would you not point out that David was PRACTICING SIN? David could request forgiveness all that he wanted, but it was not forgiven until He came into agreement (same word) with God about the sin and turned from it. *Psalms 32:5* *I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”; And You forgave the guilt of my sin.*”
- When a Calvinist uses the above verses to prove a “simply ask God for forgiveness” plan leading to salvation, we would stand against it. Are we any better when using the same verses to prove the same thought after salvation? God does not care what you are saying above that which you are doing.

B) The Practice of Sin is not permitted.

1 John 3:4-9 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.⁵ You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.⁶ No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.⁷ Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;⁸ the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.⁹ No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

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- Having the “same word” about our sins does not give us permission to practice sin in our lives. We were cleansed from our sins not to walk in them.
 - Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?
- Christ saved us from our sins for us to not practice them anymore. We died to ourselves and live to Christ out of great joy of having been forgiven.
 - Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
- We are in agreement with God about our sins when we are not practicing them. Yes we will stumble! Yes we will mess up from time to time, much of the time or all of the time in the beginning, but we are fighting sin every step of the way. That is the difference between the practiced sin and the non-practiced sin, the willingness to fight against it with Christ’s help.

C) There is “sin unto death” and “sin NOT unto death”

1 John 5:16-18 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death. ¹⁸ We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

- In this passage John is providing some advice about how to pray for a brother that is in a tough struggle with his sin. We are introduced to a concept of “sin not leading to death” and “sin leading to death”. This is one of the more intriguing locations in all the Bible, for it forces the reader to hold to the correct perspective of sin.
- John said if we ever see a brother in sin leading not to death, that sin which is not practiced, but fought, we are to pray for them. We are always to be willing to intercede on behalf of these brothers and sisters because they are trying to walk in the light just like we are trying to walk in the light. They are struggling with sin just like we are struggling with sin. We are not perfect just like they are not perfect, but we fight against it and do not give up or give in. It is more of an attitude than altitude, for we all fall short of the glory of God. If we are enlisted in prayer for this individual, not only will we be committed in our heart, but also in our actions.
- On the other hand, the brother or sister that is resolved to give up and give in to the sin, this is a sin leading to death. God cannot work with the sinner that refuses to take the path of most resistance to sin. For this individual we are not to pray for in the same way for they are on a different path with a different destination, direction and progression.
- Make no mistake, all unrighteousness is sin, but the unrighteousness that is part of a struggling Christian’s path is continually cleansed and not leading to death. No one who is born to God sins “leading to death”, for God will keep them from the evil one.

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Walking in the light has to deal with having the correct perspective of Jesus and the correct perspective of sin. By prioritizing these correctly can make a world of difference in the lives of those that believe in the name of the Son of God that they may KNOW that they have eternal life (5:13). All the salvation in the world is not good if you can't know that you have it.

Closing Story: Saved at 25, but assured at 72.