

04. The Epistle of 1 John—1:8-10

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The first part of John's 1st Epistle revolves around our having fellowship with God—

1 John 1:3-4 (NKJV)

³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things we write to you that your joy may be full...

As we have already pointed out—our fellowship with God is both '**positional**' and '**practical**' fellowship.

We enter into **positional fellowship** (oneness) with Him at the moment of salvation—which never changes because it's *eternal* life and therefore unconditional.

Practical fellowship with the LORD is something we maintain moment by moment of each and every day as we stay close to Him and away from sin—walking in the Spirit.

Positional fellowship is *permanent* and can never be broken—whereas practical fellowship can be *broken* through sin and can only be restored through confession and repentance (verse 9).

I'm not sure many Christians understand how important our fellowship is to the Lord—it is something He greatly desires from us. Understand—God doesn't *need* our fellowship—He is completely Self-sufficient and in need of nothing from us (or from anything in His creation).

While God doesn't *need* our fellowship (love)—He does ***desire*** our fellowship.

God is love, and when you are full of love—you want to share that love with others—especially with your children.

A husband and wife don't *need* children—but most couples *want* children to love and have fellowship with—which grows deeper and deeper as the child grows from infancy to adolescence to adulthood (as does our fellowship with God).

Redemption is all about restoring the fellowship with man that was broken and lost through The Fall.

Many Christians think that God's primary purpose for saving us was to keep us from going to hell—that is not true (although it's a blessed by-product!).

If that was God's primary desire in saving people, that they not go to hell, then there was a much better solution to that problem—don't create anyone in the first place and then no one goes to hell!!

The main reason that God saved us was so that we would be
connected to Him in intimate,
joyful fellowship that would

make us true worshippers (John 4:23-24)
and allow us to bring Him glory in this world.

So, God's goal in redeeming us was to bring us into fellowship with Himself, allowing us to bear the fruit of the Spirit so that we would ultimately bring Him glory as 'lights' in the darkness, so that others would see our light, be drawn to Jesus and get saved.

Of course, the devil's goal is to keep people away from God—to keep them walking in darkness so that they *never* get saved and have fellowship with Him—EVER!

But if they do get saved his primary mission then is to break their fellowship with God through temptation and sin which will sever them from the flow of God's Spirit in their life causing them to 'dry up'.

When that happens, the power of God in their life will be gone, the fruit of the Spirit will shrivel and die, their light will be extinguished and their walk with and witness for God will be neutralized.

The effect of this will be that their life will no longer bring God glory, but instead will bring dishonor and reproach on Him—even as any son or daughter who breaks the law brings reproach on the family name.

When children of God break His laws, it brings reproach on the family of God (and God Himself)—and discourages others from every wanting to know Him.

That folks, is what spiritual warfare is all about! That's why John is hitting this section so hard and driving home how important it is (now that we're saved), that we *continue* walking in the light (obedience to God's commandments).

This will bring glory to God and light the way for sinners to come to Him and be saved—but it all starts with on *our* fellowship with Him.

Listen, Satan is a master counterfeiter and deceiver, and he tries to tell people they have a relationship with God when they don't—how? By trying to direct their zeal for God down the path of religion instead of relationship. **Satan isn't anti-religion—in fact he does some of his greatest work through religion**—getting people to go to church, light candles, pray the rosary, help in the local soup kitchen etc.

This gives them the *illusion* that they 'know' God and are heaven bound when all they really have is *religion* and not a living, vital *relationship* with Jesus where they are connected to Him through the new birth and the Holy Spirit.

But John knows that the truest test of the genuineness of a person's salvation is not going to church and maintaining religious activities—it's walking in the light (keeping the commandments of God) on a regular basis.

1 John 1:5-7 (NKJV)

⁵ This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and 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...

When John talks about those who "**walk in darkness**" (verse 6), and those who "**walk in the light**" (verse 7)—he is talking about a *pattern of living*—not an occasional sin or bi-yearly pilgrimage to church for Christmas and Easter.

A person's lifestyle (what they practice on a daily basis) will reveal if they have a new nature (born-again/saved) or if they're still operating under the control of their fallen nature (an unbeliever who is a slave to Satan and sin).

John tells us that a true Christian will “walk in the light” (verse 7)—or in other words will “practice the truth” (verse 6).

1 John 1:7 (NKJV)

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 Christ His Son [continually] cleanses us from all sin.**

That’s because, once we’re saved (‘in Christ’) all our sins (past, present and future) were placed under the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. That means when we sin (in daily practice) the blood of Jesus shed on Calvary’s cross *continues* to wash us clean. In verse 7 John isn’t making a *conditional* statement—he is stating a *positional* truth.

In other words, walking in the light doesn’t save us or keep us saved—
it is the evidence that we are saved and children of God.

Because we *are* saved and ‘in Christ’ Jesus’—that’s *why* His blood continues to wash us clean when we sin. This perpetual cleansing continues all the way until the Rapture when we are glorified and sin no more.

So, as said before—my positional fellowship with God once I’m saved can never be broken—but my practical fellowship can be broken through sin. When that happens, I need to acknowledge my sin, confess it to God and ask Him for forgiveness.

When I do, as a child of God, then my day by day practical fellowship is restored, and the power and blessings of God begin to flow into my life once again!

However, John tells us that some never receive forgiveness because they refuse to *acknowledge* the sin in their lives—he gives us two examples of these kinds of people.

1 John 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸ **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**

The word ‘sin’ (singular) in verse 8 is speaking of the ‘sin-nature’ (same thing in Romans 6) that every person born into this world has inherited from Adam—this then produces various ‘sins’ (plural) which John mentions in verse 9. In other words, all human-beings are born with a corrupt, fallen nature (heart) bent on living in rebellion against God—and the result is the sins they commit every day (Galatians 5:19-21).

However today, most mental-health professionals are telling people that they are not responsible for their bad behavior—they were born a perfectly functioning person (psychologically speaking) but have been corrupted (damaged) due to external factors.

This causes them to say, “**I have no sin**” (verse 8)—“*it’s not my fault. I’m not responsible for the things I do. I’m not a sinner—I’m a victim!*”

One Christian author puts it well—

“Psychological counseling often promotes the belief that problems adversely affecting a person’s mental and emotional welfare are determined by circumstances external to the person, such as parental abuse or environment. The Bible tells us that a man’s evil heart and his sinful choices cause his mental, emotional, and behavioral problems. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications,

murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23).

Psychotherapy attempts to improve the self through concepts such as self-love, self-esteem, self-worth, self-image, self-actualization, etc. The Bible teaches that self is humanity’s main problem, not the solution to the ills that plague mankind. And it prophetically identifies the chief solution of psychological counseling, self-love, as the catalyst to a life of depravity. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...” (2 Timothy 3:1).”

It’s not until we take responsibility for our actions, by first of all acknowledging that we *are* sinners (not helpless victims) and that we are guilty of committing sins against God’s holy commandments.

It’s not until we acknowledge our sins and confess them to God that we will we receive forgiveness.

I will mention one more application to John’s statement in verse 8 about those who say **“we have no sin”**—and that is in regard to the doctrine of **“Christians perfectionism.”**

Christian perfectionism is the belief that once a person is saved, they are ‘perfect’ which means they have no sin and do not commit sin any longer.

This doctrine is based, in part, on John’s statement in chapter 3—

1 John 3:5-6, 9 (NKJV)

⁵ And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ ...Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him... ⁹ Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

John says in verse 8 that those who say **“we have no sin”** are deceiving themselves and the *truth* is not in them (the Spirit of truth), or in other words they are not saved.

The second category of those who won’t receive forgiveness from God (and who are deceiving themselves), John mentions in verse 10—**“If we say that we have not sinned...”**

Whereas the first group (verse 8) could be saying that they *no longer* sin (after being saved)—this group of people seems to be saying that they have *never* sinned at all!

You might be thinking—

“How is it possible that anyone could believe they have never sinned?!”

It’s possible if they change the rules or the standards by which certain behaviors are called sin in the first place.

In our culture today many have abandoned the idea of moral *absolutes* in favor of moral *relativism*.

They believe that there are no moral absolutes (God’s holy commandments—His righteous standard of right and wrong). Of course, if there is no absolute standard of right and wrong—then sin is impossible because sin is a violation of God’s laws, but if God doesn’t exist (they are most often atheists) then neither do His commandments exist—which causes them to say, *“I have not sinned, because sin doesn’t exist!”*

They’ll tell you things like, *“Your truth is your truth, and my truth is my truth. Whatever you feel is right to do is right for you and whatever I feel is right to do is right for me”*—a philosophy rooted in relativism.

Again, these people don't believe there is such a thing as sin—and they would tell you *"I don't sin, that's your truth and not my truth! When I have sex outside of marriage or lie to get that promotion or engage in homosexual activity or kill babies in the womb—it's not sin because my truth says it's perfectly right for me to do it!"*

Well then, Hitler wasn't an evil murderer—he was simply acting according to *his* 'truth'!

This philosophy has brought us to a period in our nation's history not unlike the period that the nation of Israel entered into under the Judges.

That was one of the blackest periods in their history which was summed up with the words, *"There was no king (sovereign ruler) in Israel therefore everyone did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."*—a nation built on moral relativism!

When a nation moves from moral absolutes (God's commandments) to moral relativism (doing whatever feels right to each person)—that nation is ripe for God's judgment!

Of course, the outworking of moral relativism is *tolerance*. You see, when people want to do whatever seems right in their own eyes without anyone opposing or judging them—they naturally don't want to be in opposition to anyone else. So the general attitude in a morally relativistic culture is, *"You accept me and I'll accept you. We won't judge each other."*—which is the general attitude of our age.

Something we are hearing a lot of today in our society about tolerance, acceptance, inclusiveness and love which the world defines basically as accepting whatever people want to do and how they want to live because to speak out against immorality and sin is to be judgmental and bigoted, self-righteous and narrow minded.

Now in contrast to man's relativistic moral insanity stands the Word of God which is true and righteous.

Psalm 19:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ The statutes of the LORD *are right*, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is pure*, enlightening the eyes; ⁹ The...judgments of the LORD *are true and righteous* altogether.

The Psalmist is telling us that God has given us absolute truth in His Word—and that becomes the standard by which we judge what is right and wrong (not our feelings).

1 John 1:10 (NKJV)

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

Jesus Christ was the only human being who could ever claim to be without sin (Heb. 4:15) anyone else who makes that claim is only deceiving themselves.

It's not until believers are glorified in heaven that their sanctification process will be complete (Romans 8:19, 23), and then they will be without sin.

Until then, all of us are going to sin once in a while—and when we do, God has given us instructions on what to do so that our sins are forgiven and our fellowship with Him is restored—

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

⁹ **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

A pastor points out something important—

“The forgiveness John speaks about here is parental, not judicial. Judicial forgiveness means forgiveness from the penalty of sins, which the sinner receives when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is called judicial because it is granted by God acting as Judge. But what about sins which a person commits after conversion? As far as the penalty is concerned, the price has already been paid by the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary. But as far as fellowship in the family of God is concerned, the sinning saint needs parental forgiveness, that is, the forgiveness of His Father. He obtains it by confessing his sin. We need judicial forgiveness only once; that takes care of the penalty of all our sins—past, present, and future. But we need parental forgiveness throughout our Christian life.”

The Greek word for **“confess”** literally means *“to say the same thing”*.

In other words, when we confess our sin, we are telling God that we agree with what He said about the thing I have done, that is was wrong and I acknowledge it was wrong—without any ‘buts’, excuses, justifications or accusations that someone else made me do it.

One pastor rightly observes—

“There are few people today who think they are sinlessly perfect, yet not many really think of themselves as sinners. Many will say “I make mistakes” or “I’m not perfect” or “I’m only human,” but usually they say such things to excuse or defend. This is different from knowing and admitting “I am a sinner.”

*To say that **we have no sin** puts us in a dangerous place because God’s grace and mercy is extended to sinners, not to “those who make mistakes” or “I’m only human” or “no one is perfect” people, but sinners. We need to realize the victory and forgiveness that comes from saying, “I am a sinner—even a great sinner—but I have a Savior who cleanses me from all sin.”*

Jesus’ story about the religious man and the sinner who prayed to God in the Temple illustrated this—

Luke 18:10-14 (NKJV)

¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' ¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Also, the word **“confess”** translates a verb that is in the *present tense*—which means we must *keep on confessing* our sin—instead of referring to a “once-for-all” confession of sin at our conversion.

As a Roman Catholic, I was told you had to go into a ‘confessional’ and confess my sins to a priest who alone had the power to forgive my sins.

You don’t have to go to a confessional to confess your sin—since all sin starts in the heart, simply confess your sins to God from the heart and your sins will be forgiven—based on the sacrifice of Christ

This is essential for our practical, everyday fellowship with the Lord to be restored when we sin—

Proverbs 28:13 (NKJV)

¹³ He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy.

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

⁹ If we confess our sins, **He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

He is **faithful** because He's promised to forgive our sins when we confess them to Him. And He is **just** ('righteous') because He paid the penalty for our sins—thus giving God a righteous basis for forgiving our sins.

Colossians 2:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses [sins]...having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

When Paul says in v.14 that Jesus took our sins out of the way—“*having nailed it to His cross*” he is referring to a practice by which guilty criminals paid their debt to society.

(Talk about all his crimes being written on a piece of parchment and nailed to his dungeon door. When he finished paying for his crimes they would take the piece of parchment and write across the bottom “tetelistai” which meant “paid in full” and give it to him as proof he had paid for his crimes)

Paul said that Jesus took all the handwritings of crimes we had committed—everything that would ever be written in our ledger and nailed it to His cross. And Jesus, before He died, from the Cross said, “*It is finished* (tetelistai—“paid in full”).”

If a person refuses to receive what Jesus Christ did on Calvary—His death which paid for all of their sins—then they will have to stand before God someday and be sentenced to pay for their own crimes against God.

“That’s OK I know I’m a good person and when I stand before God, I’ll plead my case and show Him all the ‘good things’ I’ve done. I believe He’ll be fair and let me into Heaven.”

J. Vernon McGee—

“Yes, my friend, you will be able to get a fair trial there. Your life is on tape, and Jesus Christ, the Judge happens to have the tape. I think He will have it on a television screen so that you can watch it, too (“This Was Your Life”). Do you think your life can stand the test?

Are you willing to stand before God and have Him play the tape of your life?

I do not know about you, but I could not make it. Thank God for His grace—“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).”

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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