

Real Disciples (2): If We Walk in the Light

(1 John 1:5-10)

I. Introduction

- A. One year at camp, I decided to walk back to the cabins alone in the dark
 - 1. This wasn't a rite of passage or to prove my bravery—I lost my flashlight
 - a. I walked that path 1000 times and was sure that I could do it in dark
 - b. City boys forget that on a cloudy night in woods, the dark is very dark!
 - 1) I got off path; the more I tried to find myself, the deeper I became
 - 2) I stood and waited until someone came with a light and I followed
 - c. Fortunately, I realized I followed girls counselor before a stalking charge
 - 2. This story illustrates two spiritual truths that we need to keep in mind—
 - a. **First**, when you're in the dark, you need someone with the light
 - b. **Second**, you need to make sure you follow the right person to right place
- B. That really rather sums up John's message in the beginning of **1 John**.
 - 1. The church in 1 John was confused by those who claimed to have the light.
 - a. False teachers claimed that their special knowledge was God's true light
 - b. Never mind that their "knowledge" denied the basic facts of gospel
 - 1) Christ was pure spirit—he wasn't born, he didn't die, he didn't rise.
 - 2) Spiritual knowledge pleased God, not obedience or brotherly love
 - c. John writes to point this confused church back to the true light of God.
 - 2. In our modern world of darkness, we need someone with God's true light

II. God Is Light (Reading: **1 John 1:5-10**)

- A. John's basic affirmation is "*God is light.*" Metaphor is used in two ways—
 - 1. **Intellectual Light:** Light is truth and darkness is ignorance (**2 Peter 1:19**)
 - a. We are to pay attention to the word of prophets made more certain.
 - b. He says that this word from God is a "*light shining in a dark place.*"
 - c. We sang "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path"
 - 2. **Moral Light:** Light is holiness while darkness is evil. (**Eph 5:8**)
 - a. We "*live as children of light*" and we avoid the darkness (**5:10**)
 - b. The emphasis here is not just on what we know, but on how we live
 - 3. "Light" is one of John's favorite expressions; he uses it in both senses

- B. For example, John begins his gospel with Jesus as “*the light of men*” ([Jn 1:4-5](#))
1. Jesus came as the Light of God, but the darkness resisted Him
 - a. He came to his own but “*his own did not receive him*” ([Jn 1:11](#))
 - b. John sums up gospel in terms of struggle between light and darkness
 2. Jesus is God’s light that shows up the evil of our world ([John 3:19-20](#))
 - a. Darkness isn’t just what world is LIKE—it’s what the world LIKES
 - 1) People hated Jesus; darkness hates the Light when it shows darkness
 - 2) How “F” students feel about “A” students? Happy for their success?
 - 3) Success in one points to failure in other. John’s point on the Light.
 - b. John’s imagery of Jesus as light and darkness has to do with how we live
 - 1) “*Lives by truth*” in [3:21](#) is literally “*whoever does what is true*” (ESV)
 - 2) Light is not just intellectual truth; it is also moral truth or holiness.
 3. Jesus said those who follow His Light are never in darkness ([Jonn 8:12](#))
 - a. Jesus is the light that reveals God’s truth to those who will follow.
 - b. But we must follow; those who walk in Light will live in a certain way.
- C. So for John, Jesus as Light is both a truth to believe and a life to live.
1. John’s false teachers claimed insight into Light, but they lived in darkness.
 - a. There was a huge disconnect between their claims and their lives.
 - b. Infomercial experts—why do they just get rich rather than sell it to you?
 - c. These false teachers made a lot of claims, but in the end they were claims
 2. Three times in [1 John 1:6-10](#), John uses the expression “*if we claim...*”
 3. These are the claims of the false teachers, and they all have to do with sin

III. Walking in the Light (1 John 1:6-10)

- A. **First Claim:** “*Have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness*” ([1:6](#))
1. The false teachers thought sinful acts have nothing to do with spirituality
 - a. Body is evil, so it doesn’t matter what it does. *Spirituality ≠ holiness*
 - b. The false teachers in [2 Peter](#) openly affirmed embracing sin ([2:13-14](#))
 2. But if God is light, then to walk with God means we must walk in light
 - a. Peter points us back to the Holiness Code of Leviticus in [1 Peter 1:15-16](#).
 - b. We are holy because God is holy; we walk in light because He is in light
 - c. To reflect darkness in our life choices, we aren’t really in fellowship God

3. Nobody today buys the philosophic dualistic that drive these false teachers.
 - a. We don't know any Gnostics. We don't think about matter as being evil.
 - b. No, but many act like they believe their moral actions don't really matter
 - c. So many believe that what God really wants is for us to be really happy
 - 1) Choices I make in my marriage, lifestyle and business don't matter
 - 2) What matters in my relationships, leisure time & money is happiness
 - 3) Spirituality isn't about following rules; so things I do don't matter.
4. That's what these false teachers said, with different philosophic package
 - a. John says that if God is Light, then we must walk in the light (**1:7**)
 - b. Every action either adds to the light or adds to the darkness in the world.
 - 1) God is Light, so our every good choice is a step toward God
 - 2) To claim to know God while continuing in the darkness—it is a lie
 - c. Our moral choices do matter—to choose God is to choose to live in light

B. Second Claim: *“if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves...”* (**1:8**)

1. How could anyone really claim to be without sin? *You define it narrowly.*
 - a. Woman in Ukraine saw sin as only things like murder, rape, stealing, etc
 - 1) She hadn't done any of those things, so she didn't need forgiveness
 - 2) In fact, she couldn't understand why God would want to forgive sins!
 - b. I heard someone say, *“I may not be perfect, but I'm certainly no sinner”*
 - c. *“Nobody is perfect”* is often an excuse; if everyone does it, can't be bad
2. John clearly isn't saying that *“walk in the light”* means *“be morally perfect”*
 - a. He rather equates *“walk in the light”* (**v. 7**) with *“confess our sins”* (**v. 9**)
 - b. What the false teachers didn't do and we must do—***take sin seriously***
 - 1) The only way we can sincerely confess our sin is to recognize them.
 - 2) When we judge our own sinful acts, then God immediately forgives
 - c. If we insist that our sinful choices don't matter, *we are in darkness*
3. In one of LaGard Smith's books, he tells of meeting a nightclub singer
 - a. She was introduced as a Christian, and talked of God's blessing on career
 - 1) Then she said, *“God blesses me by sending a new man to my bed...”*
 - 2) There was no thought that promiscuity conflicted at all with her faith.
 - b. Most aren't this blatant, but it is so easy to separate faith from moral acts
 - c. John wants us to know that sin matters—it leaves us to walk in the dark

C. **Third Claim:** “*we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar.*” (1:10)

1. Is this saying the same thing? John Stott see **two different points** here—
 - a. The first (v.8) is a denial that **sin exists in our nature**
 - 1) Gnostics argued gold retains its nature even if submerged in filth
 - 2) We retain our spiritual nature even when body is given over to sin
 - b. The second (v. 10) is a denial that **sin shows itself** in our conduct.
 - 1) Here the claim would mean they aren’t guilty of individual acts of sin
 - 2) Those things that they do aren’t sinful because they don’t commit sin
2. More I tried to make **two points**, more they seemed same or closely related
 - a. Both to claim to be without sin or not to sin totally denies the gospel
 - 1) The gospel says that Jesus died to save us from sin and sinful acts
 - 2) To deny the reality of sin would make Jesus die for no reason at all
 - b. The salvation gospel gets garbled if we have nothing to be saved from!
3. John says denying our sin makes us liars and makes God a liar as well

IV. Conclusion

- A. It is only when we face the reality of sin that we can escape its power over us
 1. You are familiar with the 12-Steps of AA. Notice the first 5 of those
 - a. We were powerless over alcohol—our lives had become unmanageable.
 - b. We believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us
 - c. We turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.
 - d. We make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
 - e. We admit to God, ourselves, and another person the nature of our wrong.
 2. What’s at the heart of these steps? Refusing to deny the problem of alcohol
 - a. If I refuse to admit that I have a problem, then I will not get help.
 - b. If I think I have power in myself to solve the problem, I won’ seek help
 - c. If I refuse to look deeply in myself at the problem, then I won’t be helped
- B. Is all that true? Is it true for whatever sin or sins that you struggle with?
 1. The power of the darkness is the darkness—denial, secrecy, concealment
 - a. Jesus brought God’s light into the dark world—
 - b. Bring your sin into Light of God; bring your sin to the cross
 2. Our prayer today, “*Lord, let your light, light of your face, shine on us...*”