

I John
The Believer's New Relationship to Sin (Part 1)
I John 1:5 – 2:6
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So, we come again to I John. Just to remind you of what we've learned so far, the theme of I John is "Tests of Eternal Life." In chapter 5, verse 13, John lays out this purpose, he says, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." He says, "I want you to have assurance that you truly belong to Christ." And so, the book of I John was designed by Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and written by the Apostle John to help you gain personal assurance of your own salvation.

Now, just to remind you of the structure of this book, it's unusual if you've ever tried to outline it, you know it's a challenge. It was for me and I have a sort of a preliminary outline we're working from. But two images I think help you understand the structure of this book. First of all, think of it like the musical themes in a symphony that the composer returns to again and again; but each time he returns to that same musical theme, he does so with slight variations. As this letter unfolds, that's what John does. He keeps coming back to the same themes, but he doesn't play them exactly the same; he varies them with distinct notes.

Or, you can think of this book like a spiral staircase with three tests of eternal life hanging down the center of that spiral staircase. There are these three tests that keep coming up, and the spiral staircase surrounds them; and as this letter unfolds, it's like John is walking around that spiral staircase, and he's looking and examining those three themes or three tests from different vantage points. And so, there's a slightly different sort of flavor to his perspective as he sees it

from a different angle, as the light catches it differently. It's like it's just a slightly different view, but they are the same three basic tests of eternal life.

Now, not only are there three tests; the three tests, by the way, are obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word, love for God and His people, and faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel. So those are the three tests, and he keeps coming back to them, but there are three cycles or three movements in the letter. So, three tests, but those three tests are contained within three different movements. So, you have the first movement, you have those three tests; the second movement, you have those same three tests; and the third movement, you have those same three tests, but looked at and considered from different angles.

So today, we come to the first movement or the first cycle. We finished the prologue, verses 1 to 4, and we come to the first cycle of tests of eternal life. It begins in chapter 1, verse 5, and runs through chapter 2, verse 6, with the test of obedience, the test of obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word versus sin. So, that's the nature of this first test. Let's read it together, I John, chapter 1, and I'll begin in verse 5.

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. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 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. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have

not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I've come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

Now, the theme of that section that we just read together is this, you can know that you have eternal life, that you're a true Christian, because you have a new relationship to sin. You can know that you're truly a Christian, that you're truly a follower of Jesus Christ, because your life is defined now by a new relationship to sin as opposed to before you became a Christian. Now, this test is based on two fundamental Biblical truths, and I want to look at those truths together.

The first of those biblical truths that serve as the foundation really for this test is "God's Essential Nature of Holiness," God's essential nature of holiness. That's the message of verse 5. Let's break it apart and look at it. It begins by looking at "The Unique Source" of this message about God. It is from God's Son, verse 5 says, "This is the message (Notice this.) we have heard from Him." The antecedent of the pronoun 'Him' is back in verse 3; it's Jesus Christ. So, this message about God comes from no one less than Jesus the Messiah. And He was, of course, uniquely qualified to deliver this message. We learned in verse 3 that He was with the Father

eternally. We learned in verse 1, that He is God's own self-expression; He is the Word of God. Verse 3, says He's God's only Son, and John begins his gospel in chapter 1, verse 1, by telling us He is God. So, He is uniquely qualified to tell us about God.

I love the way John puts it in his gospel, chapter 1, verse 18, “No one has seen God at any time; (but) the only begotten God (That's his name for Jesus, the only begotten God.) who is in the bosom of the Father, (That is, who enjoys this close, intimate relationship with God.) He has explained (God).” Literally, the Greek text says, “He has exegeted God.” Who else, who else is qualified but the one who is God's eternal Son? So, this message was not something that John and the Apostles discovered; it's not something they deduced philosophically; this message they received by revelation from God's own Son!

It's also uniquely come to us through Christ's Apostles. Notice verse 5, “This is the message we have heard from Him and (that we) announce to you.” John continues to use the pronoun ‘we’ in the same way he used in the prologue to remind us that he, along with the other Apostles, had been commissioned by Christ to be His legal representatives, His legal proxies, to speak on His behalf. So, this message, then, came from a unique source; it came from God's own eternal Son through the very men He chose and appointed to deliver the message on His behalf.

Now, that brings us to ‘The Unique Content of the Message.’ Verse 5 says, “This is the message.” If you've read John's letters, you know that he uses that expression on several different occasions, this is the message. It's constructed in Greek in a way that intends to

emphasize both the fact that it continues to exist, it's still the message, and also to emphasize its importance. In other words, this is a crucial, foundational truth that they had received from Jesus Christ about God and here it is, “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that (Here's the content of the message they had heard from Jesus.) God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”

Now, I think even as I read that, you sense that there aren't two messages there, there's one message, one unified message, but it consists of two parts. So, let's look at the two parts separately. Let's begin with the first part, “God is Light,” or in other words, “God is holy.” This, by the way, is one of three assertions that John makes about the nature of God. You'll remember in John, chapter 4, his gospel, **at** as Jesus talks to the Samaritan woman. In chapter 4, verse 24, Jesus says to her, “God is spirit.” He doesn't have a body like we have; He is a spirit being. In I John, chapter 4, verses 8 and 16, he says, “God is love,” and here in chapter 1, verse 5, he says, “God is Light.” In other words, this explains what God is inherently; this is His nature.

Now, we don't have a record in the Gospels that Jesus ever made this statement directly. At the same time, you remember in the last two chapters of his gospel, at the end of chapter 20, and the end of chapter 21, John tells us, “Listen, I'm just giving you a little bit of what Jesus did and said. If everything He did and said were written, the world itself couldn't contain the books.” So, I think it's very likely that John remembered this statement from Jesus, that's the way he phrases it. But regardless, we certainly see that this was always on the mind of Christ. In His high priestly prayer in John 17, the night before His crucifixion, John 17, verse 11, Jesus refers

to God as “Holy Father.” Later in that same prayer, verse 25, He refers to Him as “righteous Father.” So, this concept of God as light was constantly on the mind of Jesus our Lord.

Notice that our Lord didn't teach His disciples that God has light or God gives light, although that's true, but God is Light. God's nature is light! As one writer puts it, “No figure borrowed from the material world could ever give the idea of perfection so clearly and fully as light.” If you were **going to** put a metaphor in place for the character of God, what other metaphor would you choose but light? He is Light.

But what does it mean that God, in His nature, is Light? Well, in John's Gospel and here in this first letter, John uses these figures, light and darkness, in two primary ways. There are some others but, these by and large, are the primary ways he uses it. First of all, he uses these terms intellectually. In this case, light is the truth and darkness is falsehood and error. You see this in John 8, verse 12, “...Jesus spoke again to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.’” You can see there He’s using light as a way that is the truth that brings life. So, intellectually, light is truth and darkness is falsehood and error.

But he also uses it in a second way and that is, morally. And when he uses it in this way, light is moral purity or holiness and darkness is evil and sin. Turn with me to John 3, because in this text, Jesus uses light and darkness in both of these ways in the same few verses. John 3, verse 19, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world.” Now here He’s using, He’s talking about Himself. “I am the Light.” You know, John 1 talks about, “He's the Light that

comes into the world.” So, he says, “I am the Light,” and by this, He doesn't mean, “I am morally pure,” although that's true. He's saying, “I am the Light of truth, I've brought the truth of the gospel, I brought the way for you to be reconciled to God.”

And then He changes to the other use of light and darkness, the moral use. He says, “I brought the Light of the gospel so you can understand it and believe, but men loved the darkness (Now we get to morality.) they loved the darkness rather than Light, for their deeds were evil.” So, they didn't come and believe the message of truth that I brought, the light that I brought in the gospel, because they loved their sin.

For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

In other words, the bottom line is, if you, left to yourself, you would never come out of the darkness to the light of the truth of the gospel because you love your sin. The only way we ever come, comes later in John 6, “No man can come to the Father except (What?) the Father draws him.” The only way we ever get drawn out of the darkness is because the Father compellingly brings us to the gospel. So, it is used in these two ways, intellectually and morally.

The question is, which one is used in our text? Well, it's clear in context. Go back to 1 John. In 1 John 5, it's clear that the emphasis is on this second use, God's moral purity, God is Light in that sense. Why do I say that? Because in this section, darkness is clearly sin. Let me just show you how often John uses the word ‘sin’ as he's talking about this darkness. Verse 7, you

have the word 'sin;' verse 8, you have the word 'sin;' verse 9, 'sins' two times; verse 10, 'sin;' verse 1 of chapter 2, you have 'sin' and 'sins;' verse 2, you have 'sins.' So, what is the darkness in this section? It's talking about moral darkness; it's talking about sin and evil. So Light then in verse 5 is moral purity. God is Light. In other words, God's moral purity is like blazing white light without even the slightest shadow. God never had one thought, He's never spoken one word, He's never carried out a single act that fails to perfectly correspond to His own holy character. What we're talking about here is God's holiness.

Now, we can't class one attribute of God above the other; God is all of those things that He is described as in the Scripture. But holiness is obviously very important to God. It is His holiness that is celebrated before His throne like no other attribute of God. Isaiah 6:3, what do the seraphim cry out again and again and again in the presence of God? "Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD (God)."

So, what exactly is this attribute of holiness that's so important to God? Well, if you look at the word 'holy' or 'holiness,' in both Greek and Hebrew, it means 'to be set apart, or to set something apart.' The main idea of this word group is separation. Specifically, God is separate from everything else in two ways. First of all, He is separate, or we could say, transcendent, exalted above. He's talking about separate and distance between us and God. He is separate in His Majesty. When you look at God and you say He's holy, one thing you mean is that He is separate in His greatness, in His majesty; there's no one like Him; He is exalted above all.

You also mean that He is separate, secondly, in His moral purity. Scripture uses the same word group, holy, holiness for both of these concepts. So, you have to look in the context and see which is primarily meant. So, holiness, then, describes not only His separateness from us as creatures, His greatness, His majesty, but also His separateness from us as sinners, His holiness, His purity.

Robert Raymond writes, “He is morally pure.” Think about this; God is morally pure, infinitely, eternally, and unchangeably, with regard to His character, His thoughts, and His actions. He is morally pure, He is Light, He is holy.

The second part of the message that Christ delivered to His Apostles and they’re delivering to us is that God is completely without sin, God is completely without sin. Notice verse 5 goes on to say, “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” Now this is not redundant with the first part of the verse. This is making a further point about God's nature. Literally, the Greek text reads this way, “And darkness in Him is not, not at all, and darkness in Him is not, not at all.” Darkness here obviously refers to sin as I showed you a moment ago. But notice the last word translated here in our text as, “Not at all.” The word literally means, ‘not 1.’ It's composed of two Greek words that means ‘not,’ and then the cardinal number ‘1,’ not 1. There's not one bit of darkness in God, not a single trace of darkness, not 1 sin.

Now, why would he say this and not just say God is light? Because of the world we live in! The world we live in has light and darkness in varying shades, right? I mean, think about it, even on the brightest summer day, the sun shining down at noon, what do you still have around

us? Shadows! You still have some degrees of darkness. The very brightest thing we know, I mean, think about even the sun. The sun is the brightest thing in our lives, and when you look at the sun with magnification and with filters, you realize that even on our sun, as brilliant as it is, there are sunspots that are darker than the surrounding areas. Everything we know is in shades of light and dark.

John wants us to know that our God isn't like that; He is light unlike any we have ever experienced; there's not even a hint or a shadow in the character of God. He is nothing but light. He is utterly separate from everything that is evil and sinful; there is no shadow in the character of God; there are no shades of light; there are no sunspots in the character of God. He is nothing but brilliant, glazing, perfect light.

Psalm 5, verses 4 and 5 say this:

...You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil (No evil!) dwells with You... You hate all who do iniquity.

Habakkuk 1:13, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You (do) not look on wickedness with favor." James 1:13, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted by evil." I mean, think about that, not only is there no shadow in the character of God, no shades of light; He's perfect pure light; He can't even be tempted to have a shadow.

Now, we sit here as believers, having embraced this like the church has for 2,000 years, and this seems obvious. Well, let me tell you this was not obvious to the pagans in 1st century Ephesus

where John lived and served at this point in his life. In fact, all of the people in that culture, if they heard what we just studied together, they would have been shocked. Why? Because that wasn't the nature of their gods. Pagan gods weren't like this at all.

One author puts it this way:

They had gods that could cheat and lie, gods licentious and un-chaste, gods spiteful and malignant towards men, quarrelsome and abusive toward each other. They had been accustomed to think of the Godhead as a mixed nature like their own, only on a larger scale, good and evil, kind and cruel, pure and wanton, made of darkness and light.

Those were the pagan gods.

If you've read anything about Greek and Roman mythology, you understand that. So, they would have been shocked when John said, "The real true and living God is nothing but Light!"

Now, in the context, what's John's point, why does he say this about God? Well, the fact that God's essential nature is perfect light must necessarily determine the conditions for fellowship with Him. Think about it, you can't know God, the true and living God whose character is pure light, and who is completely without sin, and continue living in your own. That's what he's saying. So, the first biblical truth that John explains is this, God's essential nature of holiness, that is the foundation for everything.

Now, from that flows a second truth that really is the rest of this section, "The Believer's New Relationship to Sin," the Believer's New Relationship to Sin. Verse 5 explains the reason the believer has this new relationship to sin, it's because of his fellowship, his new fellowship with

the Father and with the Son, and because of God's essential holiness, you can't know God, you can't be in a relationship with God, you can't continue to say, "I know God," and have the same relationship to sin you had before. It's simply not possible. So, in the rest of the section, John shows us how our relationship to sin reveals whether we are genuine Christians or whether we are false Christians.

Now, I'm **going** to use that term 'false Christians' a number of times, so let me define it for you. Here's what I mean by that. I mean people who say, "I'm a Christian, yep, I profess Jesus Christ, I follow Jesus, I love Jesus." So here is somebody who says, "Yes, I affirm all those things that the rest of you people affirm," but who isn't really a follower of Jesus Christ, and that's evident by how they live. That's what I mean by a false Christian, somebody who says, "I'm Christian," but really isn't from God's perspective.

So, beginning with verse 6, and running down through chapter 2, verse 6, what we're **going** to see is a recurring pattern. Here's the pattern. The first thing John does is quote the false claim of a person who is a false Christian, a person who says he's a Christian but isn't. So, he quotes that false claim; and then secondly, he explains how a real Christian thinks and acts. That's the pattern; let me show you how it flushes out. Verse 6, "If we say," here's the false claim; verse 7, here's the real Christian; verse 8, "If we say," here's the false claim; verse 9, here's a real Christian; verse 10, "If we say," here's the false claim; chapter 2, verses 1 and 2, here's the real Christian.

Now, the next portion is a little trickier because it's from verse 4, is the false claim, "The one who says," there's your false claim, but the verse before it, verse 3, and then first part of verse 5, is the real Christian. So, it divides a little differently. And then the last one is chapter 2, the middle of verse 5, down through verse 6; and there, you just have the real Christian and the false claim is implied as we'll see, but not clearly stated. But that's the pattern that we'll see throughout.

Now, from this recurring pattern, we learn how a believer's relationship with sin is different from someone who is a false Christian. There is a difference. You can see from their relationship to sin who's real and who's not. So, let's look at these differences, there are several differences. The first one is the one we will look at this morning. The new relationship that a true believer has with sin is shown by the pattern of his life, it's shown by the pattern of his life. A false Christian habitually lives in sin; a false Christian habitually lives in sin, that's verse 6.

Let's look at their false claim. Verse 6 begins, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him." Now, John changes the meaning of the pronoun 'we' here. He's not saying now that he and the other Apostles ever made this claim. Instead, he's simply including himself with all of those who claim to be Christians. We could paraphrase it like this, "If any professing Christian says. . . ." And what John goes on to quote is either an actual quote from the words of the false teachers and their followers, or at the very least, he's capturing their thinking.

Literally, the text reads like this, "If we are saying that we are having fellowship with Him," in other words, if we are consistently claiming that we are in the fellowship with God, that we have

an ongoing relationship with God, that we know God, and then it goes on to say we say, “We say we are having that fellowship with Him, and yet walk in the darkness.” Literally, “and in the darkness we are walking.”

I think you understand that 'walk' is a common New Testament picture of a person's habitual course of life, their regular moral conduct, the entirety of their daily thoughts and actions, if we are continually walking in the darkness. In other words, if we live a habitual lifestyle that is characterized by sin, that is antithetical to the nature of the God who is Light, whom we claim to know, then there's a problem because it shows us for who we are. Because, guess what, unbelievers are characterized by walking in the darkness.

Listen to Psalm 82:5, “...(The) wicked walk about in darkness,” in sin. Proverbs 2:13, “The wicked leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness.” In Proverbs, chapter 4, verses 18 and 19:

The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know over what they stumble.

You say, “Okay, I get it, you know, unbelievers walk in darkness, but what does that look like?”

Let me show you exactly what it looks like.

Go to 1 Corinthians, chapter 6; 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 9, Paul says the same thing John is saying. He says in verse 9:

Or do you not know that the unrighteous (those who are characterized as being unrighteous) will not inherit the kingdom of God?" They're not getting into Jesus's spiritual kingdom, they're not getting into Jesus's future physical kingdom; they're just not getting in. "Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, (those who habitually live in sexual sin outside of marriage), nor idolaters (those who worship other gods), nor adulterers (those who engage in sex with those who aren't their spouses), nor (And the next two words have to do with homosexuality; the one word "effeminate" has to do with the feminine partner in the relationship.) "homosexuals" (has to do with the more masculine partner in the relationship), nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor reviler's (What is a reviler? Just go on the Internet; you'll meet plenty of them. They are the people who spend their lives throwing out their hatred at other people, reviling in their language and the way they treat people.), nor swindlers (those who **who** bilk people out of their money; who take financial advantage of other people. None of these who are characterized by these sins.) will inherit the kingdom of God.

Now this isn't a comprehensive list; it's a representative list. And then he says, verse 11, "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God." In other words, when a person comes to true faith, they're changed; they don't walk in those patterns of sin anymore.

Go over to Galatians, chapter 5, here's another list to help you sort of identify what "walking in darkness" looks like. Verse 19, Paul here is contrasting those who are unbelievers, "in the flesh" with those who are "in the Spirit." He says in verse 19:

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, (You want to know what somebody who's living an unregenerate life looks like? Well, here's what it looks like; the first three words are consumed with sexual sin.), ...immorality, impurity, sensuality (just given over to sexual sin), idolatry, sorcery.

The Greek word is '*pharmakia*' from which we get our word pharmacy, in trying to connect with the other world or with, in witchcraft and other things. They would use drugs to sort of induce that state.

The next group of words have to do with relationships, has to do with people whose lives leave relationships in shambles. It says:

...enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing (That's everything that goes with the party scene.) and things like these (So, this isn't a comprehensive list either.) of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice (There's the keyword; who practice as a habit of life, an unbroken, unrepentant, pattern of life, those who live like this) ...will not inherit the kingdom of God.

He goes on to say:

(Those are) But the fruit of the Spirit (Here's how you know if you've been changed, the fruit of the Spirit...) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (those are the qualities that mark a person who's been changed, who's indwelt by the Holy Spirit.)

And so, there you have the picture.

So, back in our text in chapter 1, verse 5, this is a person who claims to know God but his or her habits of thinking, speaking, and acting, are characterized by the kinds of sins we just read about, things contrary to God's very nature.

By the way, this false claim in verse 6, may have arisen from the 1st century false teaching called “Pre-Gnosticism.” Those false teachers saw all matter as evil; since the body is matter, the body is evil, so they just excuse sin in the body; it doesn't really matter, you can't do anything with the body anyway; so let it sin all it wants, and don't worry about it; it has no effect on your relationship to God. Well, there's not much of true Gnosticism around today, but you don't have to be Gnostic to hold this view. Sadly, American churches are filled with people who make this claim. “Yep, I have fellowship with God, I know God,” and they walk in the darkness.

What's their real condition? Well, verse 6, he goes on to say, “If that's your claim, you lie!” This is John's response to, “If we are saying,” such a claim is a lie; it's not just a mistake, it's a lie. Now, it may be a conscious lie; there are people who absolutely know they're not Christians but claim to be for whatever reason, and they know in their heart of hearts they're not truly Christians. But I think for other people, it's self-deception; they've lied to themselves and convinced themselves that their life matches the holy God they claim. But regardless, it's still a lie!

He goes on to say, “And do not practice the truth.” In other words, not only is their claim a lie, their lives are a lie. The present tense means day after day, they are not practicing the truth; their lives consistently fail to show an obedience to God's truth in the Scripture. To do the truth is simply to respond to it with obedience. You see, false Christians deny the truth of God by their sinful lives.

My fear is that there are some in this church who claim to have fellowship with God, but who live in the lifestyle of sin. Can I just plead with you to consider your true condition? A verbal profession of faith in Jesus Christ does not mean that you are a Christian. It doesn't matter that you prayed a prayer in the past; it doesn't matter that you walked forward in an emotional experience; it doesn't mean that you cried at some point; that's not what it means to be a Christian. It doesn't matter that you threw a stick in the fire, that you know, somebody wrote in the front of your Bible the date you became a Christian. There are true Christians and there are false Christians. Jesus taught that many who claim to follow Him don't. In Matthew, chapter 7, He said, “Many will say to me on the day of judgment, ‘LORD, LORD, I know you,’ and He says, I will say to them, ‘Depart from me. I never knew you, you who work lawlessness.’”

So, let me just ask you pointedly, “Is there more sin in your life than holiness? Is there more disobedience to the Scripture in your life than obedience to Christ? Do you respond to the sin in your life by thinking, ‘Listen, I know God; I'm a Christian, and He's **going** be okay with how I'm living.’” Do you think, “I'm eternally secure, once saved, always saved, so I can sin and it's okay?” What that says is that you were never saved at all. A false Christian claims to follow Christ but lives in a pattern of sin.

On the other hand, a true Christian habitually lives in holiness, a true Christian habitually lives in holiness. Notice verse 7, the believers, the true believer's lifestyle, "...but if we walk in the Light (if we are consistently living a pattern of holiness, if we are walking in the light) as He Himself is in the Light." By the way, John is saying something different there about God. In verse 5, he says, "God is Light," in verse 7 he says, "God is in the Light." Because God is Light, He lives in the Light.

1 Timothy 6:16, "... (God) dwells in unapproachable light. What's the point? Because God's character is pure, His actions are pure. The same thing is true for the believer; if you have been changed in your innerbeing, then it will demonstrate itself in your outward actions. The true believer just as surely reflects God's holiness in how he walks or lives daily as the moon reflects the sun. The moon can't do anything but simply reflect the sun. The same thing is true for the true believer.

Our relationship to sin has changed, why? Because we changed kingdoms. If you're a true believer, you changed kingdoms. Look at Colossians; Colossians, chapter 1, verse 13, "(The father) rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." In other words, if you're a Christian, when you came to Christ at that moment God took you out of the kingdom of darkness and he transferred you to the kingdom of light, the kingdom of His Son. You're in a different kingdom now than you used to be, and your nature is different than it used to be.

Listen to Paul in Ephesians 5, 8 and 9, "...you were formerly darkness, (Notice he doesn't say, "You walked in the darkness;" he says, "You were darkness." That's before Christ.) but now you are Light." In other words, your very nature changed. "(Therefore), walk as children of Light." The reason we walk in the light is because we're no longer darkness; we are light, we've been changed, our nature has been changed. So, the Christian has a new lifestyle marked by holiness rather than sin.

Now notice in verse 7, John says that produces two results. The first result is, "...we have fellowship with one another." Now, you might think that means we have fellowship with God since he has just been talking about that in verse 6. But that's not what he says. The Greek word "one another" occurs seven times in John's letters, always of a human relationship. So, he says, "Because we're walking in the Light (Like God is in the Light.), we are having fellowship with other believers."

Now, why does he say that true Christians have fellowship with other Christians and not fellowship with God? Because, being in the fellowship with other Christians is a visible evidence of being in the fellowship with God. And, this fellowship with believers implies fellowship with God. You remember verse 3, "We have fellowship with both God and His Son and other believers." And, the parallelism between verses 6 and 7, in verse 6, we claim to have fellowship with God; in verse 7, we have fellowship with one another, so the two go together. He's saying both are true. If you are walking in the light, if your lifestyle is marked by holiness, you know you are in the fellowship both with other Christians and, therefore, with God.

Verse 7, adds another result of our walking in the light, "...and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Now, whenever Scripture speaks of blood, understand this, it's not the physical fluid that flowed through the veins of Jesus that saves. When it refers to the blood in both Testaments, blood stands for the blood of an innocent sacrifice whose blood has been shed, in other words they have died as a sacrifice in the place of the guilty. So, when we say, "the blood of Jesus cleanses," we're saying the violent death of Jesus as a sacrifice is what cleanses.

Notice how he says that this sacrificial death that reconciles us to God is "the death of Jesus. His Son." I love that! Jesus is the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. His Son means He was also God's eternal Son. This was written, by the way, to confront Cerinthus, a heretic who was a contemporary of John's, in Ephesus, who taught that the man who died on the cross was only a man. So, John just confronts him and says, "No! Jesus was God's Son; He had both a human and divine nature; it was the God-man who died on the cross."

Now, look again at verse 7. What John says is literally, "The blood of Jesus His Son keeps on cleansing us." Now, that is so important because it makes it clear that walking in the Light is not the same as spiritual perfection. "Walking in the Light" is not the absence of sin. I mean, verse 9 says, "believers confess their sins." Verse 10 says, "believers don't deny their sins." Chapter 2, verse 1 says, "When believers do sin, they have an Advocate." So, "walking in the Light" doesn't mean you're sinless; it means that the habit of your life is walking in holiness. In this context, 'cleanses' means 'to make morally clean.'

You know, stepping back from this text, we all need spiritual cleansing. Isaiah 64:6 says, "...all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment." Sadly, there are people who think they're **going** get to heaven and say, "The reason you should let me in, Lord, is I think my good deeds outweigh my bad ones." Well, listen to what Isaiah says, "Your best day, your best act in your life is like filthy rags in the sight of God." You're not **getting in** on that basis; we need spiritual cleansing.

This spiritual cleansing was Christ's goal. Titus 2, verse 14, "(Christ) gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify (to cleanse) for Himself a people for His own possession." How did it happen? Well, God provided our initial cleansing through the gospel; it began the moment of salvation with regeneration. Listen to Acts 15:9, "(He, at that moment, cleansed our) hearts by faith." The moment you were saved, God cleaned you up. 1 Corinthians 6:11, I read it a moment ago, "Such were some of you; but you were washed," you were cleaned. So, this cleansing happens initially at the moment of salvation.

But believers need ongoing cleansing because we continue to sin; and while we've been justified, our sins have been dealt with in front of the judgment throne of God, we now sin against our Father. Here's how Jesus describes it in John 13:10. You remember he was washing the disciples' feet and Peter refused and said, "I'm not going to have it" and Jesus said, "Well, if you don't let me wash your feet, you have no part of me." And Peter, typically, says, "Well, then give me a bath." And Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed (That is the initial cleansing that happens at salvation.) needs only to wash his feet (That's the ongoing cleansing for the

believer.)” But he’s already completely clean because he’s already had a bath and he walks down the street there in Jerusalem; you just need your feet cleaned. We need our feet cleaned.

How does that happen? Well, this ongoing cleansing that we need takes place through confession, repentance, and then a renewed commitment to obedience. Look at I John 1:9, we’ll get there, but look at it with me. Here’s how this cleansing happens, “If we confess (literally, If we are confessing) our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and (Here it is.) to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The way this ongoing cleansing takes place is by confessing, repenting, and walking again in the path of obedience, and we’re clean.

But notice what it says, “And the blood of Jesus, His Son, keeps on cleansing us from all sin.” If the pattern of our lives is holiness, when we sin and when we confess it to the Lord and repent of it, the blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing us from all sin, regardless of the kind of sin, regardless of the seriousness of the sin, regardless of the length of the sin, regardless of the depth of the stain that that sin leaves on our soul. Listen, Christian, there is no sin beyond the power of Jesus’s blood to cleanse; it doesn’t matter what you’ve done. If you will confess and repent, if you’ll turn back.

By the way, that’s true if you’re here this morning and you’re not a follower of Jesus Christ, it doesn’t matter what you’ve done, it doesn’t matter what you’ve become. The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ can make you perfectly clean! In the words of Isaiah, “Whiter than snow;” that’s what God will do to your soul if you repent and turn to Him.

So, here's the first test of whether you have eternal life, whether you know God. What's the pattern of your life? Do you habitually live in sin? Then, don't say you know God who is light. Or, do you habitually live in holiness?

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for the clarity of your Word; thank you for the encouragement of this passage. Lord, you know my prayer is that you will use these things to truly encourage and bring assurance to those who are your own. But Father, I pray you would use this very same message and passage to bring conviction and a sense of your foreboding judgment to those who claim to know you but walk in the darkness. Lord, may they realize there's hope for them if they will simply throw themselves on your mercy, if they'll come to you in the words of that wonderful beatitude of our Lord, if they'll come to you like a beggar, "Blessed are the beggars in spirit, for to them belongs the kingdom of heaven." Lord, may they throw themselves on your mercy today and find the forgiveness that's in Jesus Christ and in His blood. We pray in Jesus's name, Amen.