

Walking in the Light and the Forsaking of Sin (1 John 1:5-10)

(Assurance of Salvation in 1 John, Part 1)

Twenty-one marks in the assurance of salvation from 1 John:

1. He walks in the light as God is the light, and is in the light (1:5-7)

Context of 1 John:

- Gnostics and false teachers had infiltrated the infant Christian congregations in Ephesus and the surrounding regions (Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea). They rejected the notion that any god would materialize in our world by denying that Jesus was God incarnate (1 Jn. 1:1-4; 2:22-23; 4:2). They claimed that Jesus (God incarnate) only seemed (Docetism) to appear in the flesh.
- As a result, there was confusion about what was orthodoxy (through the teachings of the disciples and apostles) and what was heresy. This new teaching led people astray.
- As a disciple and apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, John will address these false teachers and assure those who follow the Name of the truth about God.

God is light (v.5):

- Light is used over 200 times in Scripture and includes physical and metaphorical motifs.
- God's essence is light. While He created light, He is an uncreated light of a different kind than created light.
- Light is immaterial, diffusive, pure, and glorious. Physically, it represents glory; intellectually, truth; morally, holiness; condition of life and God as life; pure and illuminating. God dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:15-16).
- Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12) and has come to the world as light (Jn. 12:46).
- Those whom God has regenerated are indwelt by His light and partakers in His divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

Fellowship with God is measured in part by fellowship with "one another" (v.6-7):

- John does not say, "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with Him" (which is also true). Instead, he says that we have fellowship with *one another*.
- This letter would have been read and circulated by various churches in Ephesus and the surrounding region. The context is congregational gathering.
- Men and women who walk in the light, as God is in the light, desire to belong to others who are also walking in the light.

The consequence of walking in the light, in truth, and fellowship with one another (v.6-8):

- Contextually, many false teachers and religious elite refused to congregate with one another because they believed themselves to be without sin. False teachers argued that people who walk in the light do not sin.
- Walking in the light and the truth are used as synonyms. What is the "truth" (v.6, 8)?
 - It is more than a body of intellectual facts but is moral and soteriological.
 - It relates to God's holiness and our sinfulness. In 1 John, doing the truth includes walking in the light and confessing sin.
 - It is personified and propagated by the Son, Who is the Truth (John 14:6), and the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17-19).
- This "walking" is propagated by the ministry of the word (truth, v.8) and fellowship with those also walking in the light. God ministers to us, and we minister to one another.
- *Cleansing of sin*: Jesus' blood makes an effectual cleansing of not only the reign but the stain of sin. John counters these gnostic teachers by reminding the congregations that the blood of Christ has a cleansing effect on those who walk in the light.

2. He sees his sin, confesses it as sin, and forsakes it (1:8-10)

- False teachers taught that those who know God do not sin and have no need to confess sin, for they claimed perfection. John rejects this and corrects their false view of the supposed Christian life. Those who say "they are without sin" are the ones in darkness.

If we confess our sin (v.9):

- The "if" is conditional. Will you?
- To confess (in Greek) means to agree and admit to an accusation, to declare openly and unreservedly. Confession is equivalent to forsaking and repenting of sin in 1 John.
- Confession can be public (Lk. 18:13), private (Ps. 32:5), individual (Ez. 10:1), and corporate (Neh. 9:3). We can confess personal sins (Matt. 3:6) and intercede for others (Dan. 9:20).
- While confession can be made to others (Josh. 7:19-21) and to those whom we have offended (Jam. 5:16), it must always be to God (Ps 51:1-4). The confession here is to God.
- The confession of sin (agreeing with God that sin is indeed sin) is evidence of belonging to God. Our awareness of sin is in proportion to our nearness to God. The closer a saint walks with God (Who is both light and in the light), the more he is aware of his own sin.
- When God's light is shed abroad through the ministry of the word, fellowship with one another, and the truth, the Spirit of God exposes sin.

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (v.9):

- Our sins are not forgiven (judicially) before God because we confess them. Jesus Christ's atonement is sufficient for all sins (past, present, and future). In faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, God sends our sins to the place of no remembrance (Isa. 38:17), to a place of no recovery (Mic. 7:19), and a place of no return (Ps. 103:12).
- When we confess and forsake our sins, and God "forgives" them, it is not the act of forgiveness but the application of pardoning grace that is humbling us under the sense of sin, weighed down by guilt.
- Confessing the sin is not the cause of the forgiveness (the atonement has procured that) but is instead the manifestation of that forgiveness. Confessing sin is evidence of atonement: it is descriptive, not prescriptive, that all sins have been paid for.
- This "forgiveness of sin" is not judicial but paternal. It is not between lawbreaker and judge, but father and son. Forgiveness is the restoration of fellowship that is severed from that sin.
- God is faithful to forgive us (reconciliation) and to cleanse us from sin.

Application: When God's light shines in the hearts of His children, what happens?

- A. Sin is uncovered as sin, with no blame-shifting and excuses (God's truth/light exposed).
- B. If that saint desires to walk with God (in that light) after God's convicting light (revelation) exposes his sin, the saint has two options:
 - Confess it as sin, forsake it, and find restored fellowship, joy, and intimacy with God (and others) severed from that sin (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19).
 - Refuse to confess, forsake, and walk in the light. In darkness, the saint will be miserable. True regeneration may be suspect (at best) if he remains in the dark and unrepentant in his sin.

Intimacy with God is not only measured by the awareness and frequency of sin (necessarily) but by the timeframe between when God's light exposes that sin and when the sinner repents of that sin. Our awareness of sin is in proportion to the degree of light. The paradox in this assurance of salvation is that only those in the light see (and consequently repent of) their sin. Confession of sin is a demonstration of being in the light. Those in darkness will never repent, for only God's light exposes sin in the darkness.