

An Honest Relationship with God – 1 John 1:6-9

Introduction – John writes to believers about the truth of the Incarnation in order that they may have fellowship and joy (vv1-4). Dishonest claims about that fellowship with God have been made by antichrists which must be corrected, and these claims exist in churches to this day. John deals with three and we will address the first two now.

Dishonest Claim #1: Fellowship and Darkness Go Together (vv6-7) – Is it possible to have an ongoing fellowship with God while at the same time habitually walk in darkness? Of course, this requires us to reconsider v5 where we are told that “*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*” Therefore the claim (v6) is dishonest and so “*we lie and do not practice the truth.*” The early false teaching was that since matter was inherently corrupt, it really did not matter how we lived; fellowship with God was not affected by our outward living. This error is also called antinomianism (against law). But darkness and light have no fellowship; they do not stay together.

Our Temptation – Do you ever say to yourself, “What really matters is what I am deep in my heart” in order to justify your outward disobedience? But those who walk in the darkness have no assurance of who they really are “deep in their heart.”

Walking in the Light – This phrase is not teaching sinless perfection at all. If it were, why would those who are walking in the light need Jesus to cleanse them from all sin (v7)? Rather, if we are walking in the light, we will acknowledge our sin, and it is dealt with in Jesus. Remember, John is writing to Christians, not unbelievers; he is correcting false-teaching that others have tried to bring into the church. Walking in the light means walking in accordance to the Word and the Word teaches that Christians need ongoing cleansing from ongoing sin. We need to constantly stand under the shower of grace to wash away our dirt of sin; he assumes that Christians need ongoing forgiveness.

The Blood of Jesus Christ – Jesus had blood, real blood, because He had a real body. And this real man was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. Cleansing from sin could come from no one else, no other way; to believe anything else was also to be walking in darkness. Salvation is earthy, bloody, down here, not up in heaven or in our heads or in some higher spiritual plane of enlightenment. Therefore it affects everything down here.

Another Temptation – In contrast to having fellowship with God (v6), we are told that if we walk in the light, we have fellowship with one another (v7). John interchanges these because they go together (v3). We are not walking in the light or having fellowship with God if we are not in fellowship with one another; we are lying and not practicing the truth.

Dishonest Claim #2: By Nature, I’m not a Sinner (vv8-9) – Let’s say it again: to walk in the light is not to be sinless, otherwise none of us would be walking in the light. This leads us to the second dishonest claim, and it is more sophisticated and more deadly. The first claim at least acknowledged that there might be sin while denying that it estranged the sinner from God. Now the very fact of having a sinful principle is denied. Quite the opposite of reaching a state of enlightenment that gives one a sense of sinless perfection, a godly state of enlightenment reveals the truth to us: even in the Christian, there is an ongoing battle between the Spirit and the flesh (Gal 5:16-18). This is related to the teachings of Pelagius, who denied original sin, or neo-Pelagianism which teaches that there is no sin-principle left at all in our flesh. But John says “*if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.*”

Self-Deception – Lying to yourself is a very complex matter, but a very common tactic of the Deceiver. Many Christians find comfort in the fact that they have heard the Word regardless of whether they are doing the Word (James 1:22-26). This is spiritual anorexia and this spiritual deception is monstrous.

Breaking Free – “*If we confess our sins*” means that we agree with God, say the same thing about ourselves and our actions, and this brings relief from the self-deception, because it’s tough to keep lying to yourself all the time. And when I confess my sins and my sinfulness, I find that I cannot blame my sin on anyone or anything else. And then I fall upon God’s mercy alone – and receive it.

Faithful and Righteous – God is faithful to forgive us our sins because He promised He would (Jer 31:34). God is righteous (just) to forgive us our sins even though the Judge of all the earth cannot lightly remit sin. How can God be just and the One who justifies our sin? The answer, of course, is the cross (Rom 3:24-26). Simply put, God is faithful to forgive because He promised to do so, and just because His Son died for our sins. There are many warnings in Scripture regarding the concealing of our sins (Ps 32:1-5, Prov 28:13).

An Honest Relationship with God – We walk in righteousness as long as we acknowledge our unrighteousness. If we say we have no sin, there is no truth in us; but if we acknowledge our sin, there is truth in us. We find we are walking in the light when we confess our stumblings in the darkness. This is the paradox. And in this honesty, we do not rest in our confession of sin, but in the imputed righteousness of Christ. Our salvation does not depend on our keeping honest and short accounts, but our assurance, fellowship, and joy most certainly do, which is why John writes this letter (vv3-4).