

Unit II: Grace and Reconciliation

The Wrong Path

DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 59:1-8

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Genesis 3:1-24; 6:5-8; Mark 7:14-23;

Romans 1:18-32; 3:10-18; 1 John 1:5-2:6

PRINT PASSAGES: 1 John 1:5-10; 2:1-6

KEY VERSES

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9, KJV)

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If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Summarize the Gospel in terms of the contrasts presented in 1 John 1:5–2:6.
- Confess the lies we tell ourselves and accept God's truth instead.
- Demonstrate gratitude for Christ's pardon from sin by living as Christ lived.

*Key Terms

Cleanses (1:7)—Greek: *katharizó* (kath-ar-id'-zo): to cleanse; make clean, literally, ceremonially, or spiritually; “cleanseth” (KJV).

Darkness (1:5)—Greek: *skotia* (skot-ee'-ah): wickedness; ignorance; moral or spiritual darkness.

Declare (1:5)—Greek: *anaggelló* (an-ang-el'-lo): to speak God's word; announce; disclose; report.

Fellowship (1:6)—Greek: *koinónia* (koy-nohnee'-ah): close association; partnership; communion.



The Biblical Context

First John is the first and longest of a series of three letters attributed to John. The Gospels identify John as one of Jesus' original twelve disciples and one among His three most intimate associates. Biblical scholars agree that John composed this letter during the latter part of the first century from Ephesus to churches in Asia Minor, where he ministered and continued exercising apostolic authority. False teachers had entered some of the early churches in this region and spread wrong ideas about who Jesus really was. They denied that Jesus was fully God and twisted the basic teachings passed down from the apostles. That's why John wrote this letter—to challenge those false teachings and protect the truth. John wrote to correct these beliefs and remind the church of the truth about Jesus' identity.

The main goal of 1 John was to help believers stay grounded in the core truths of the Christian faith and to reassure them that they truly belonged to God. In this part of the letter, John focuses on three key signs of genuine faith: living in obedience to God, showing love for others, and holding on to the truth about who Jesus is (see 1 John 1:7–2:17).

Light (1:5)—Greek: *phós* (foce): brightness; a symbol of the presence of God; radiance; fire.

Truth (2:4)—Greek: *alétheia* (al-ay'-thi-a): verity; true to fact; reality; divine insight revealed to humanity; the Gospel.

¹(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

An *enemy* is a person who actively opposes someone or something. Everything has an enemy—someone or something that opposes, threatens, or seeks to harm. Opposing forces producing conflict are realities in many areas of life. For example, the physical body's health is opposed by various debilitating diseases. There is also an opposing force, an enemy, to youth—aging. Current national and world conditions continue revealing that the enemy of peace and order is widespread chaos. Therefore, we might conclude that physical life generally has enemies. Just as these and other unlisted examples show natural opposition, humanity's greatest enemy is sin. Why?

First and foremost, sin separates us from God by creating a barrier between us and Him, ultimately leading to spiritual death. Sin also corrupts, enslaves, and leads to destruction. God, however, provided the remedy for this enemy through His Son, Jesus Christ, who paid sin's price by taking our punishment. By dying on the Cross, God offered salvation to all who believe in Him. Although we cannot defeat sin on our own, we can experience victory over it through the Holy Spirit because of our restored relationship with God. To maintain fellowship with Him who is light (1 John 1:5), we must intentionally “walk in the light.” We can do so by letting our behavior reflect our faith's authenticity, but accepting Christ as Savior does not make us sinless or incapable of sinning. The Word is clear that we cannot claim to have fellowship with Him while still sinning. Therefore, as Christians, we must actually

live what we claim to believe—this is the most convincing evidence that our lives have been transformed by God. However, *when* we sin, we have an advocate, Jesus Christ, who will intercede for us, forgive us, and cleanse us continually from unrighteousness when we genuinely repent and confess our sin (1 John 1:9).

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Inconsistent Walk (1 John 1:5-7)

KJV

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto 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 the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

NIV

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

6 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.

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, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

John begins chapter 1 by affirming that he was writing about what he had personally heard, seen, and touched—namely, the Lord Jesus Christ and His ministry. This firsthand testimony was essential because false teachers had infiltrated the early church, denying the reality of Christ's incarnation. In response, John contested their deception and reassured his readers that they can have a personal relationship and fellowship with the Christ he saw and heard (verses 1-4). In verse 5, John shares a foundational truth he received directly from Jesus Christ incarnate: God is light—holy, pure, and entirely without sin. This truth establishes the standard for genuine fellowship with the Lord. Since God is light, those who claim to follow Him must reflect His holiness and purity. However, those who claim to be in fellowship with God while living in sin are deceiving themselves and others (verse 6). John specifically addresses self-professed believers who attempt to walk with God while embracing sin. While no Christian is sinless, those who desire to walk in God's light will make a noticeable effort to align their lives with His truth, demonstrating the evidence of a transformed heart. In verse 7, John calls believers to live according to God's way by emulating His holiness and truth. He emphasizes that Christ's shed blood continually cleanses believers from every sin—past, present, and future. John's message

is both an encouragement and a challenge. Fellowship with God is never maintained by words alone, but through a life that demonstrates genuine transformation. As believers walk in the light, they enjoy two profound benefits: intimate fellowship with God and the continual cleansing power of Christ's sacrifice.

QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What practical steps can we take to consistently "walk in the light" daily?

Inconsistent Talk (1 John 1:8-10)

KJV

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

NIV

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

Earlier in chapter 1, John talks about the difference between people who say they know God but keep living in sin, and those who truly follow Jesus. In verse 8, he challenges people who take it even further by claiming they have no sin at all. The first group ignores their sin, thinking it doesn't affect their relationship with God. The second group is in complete denial—they don't believe sin is even a part of their lives, which shows they don't understand how the Holy Spirit works to change us over time.

The Bible makes it clear that everyone sins (see Romans 3:10-12, 23; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Isaiah 64:6). Saying we don't sin means we don't really understand God's truth. It also keeps us from confessing our sins, which blocks our spiritual growth and causes us to miss out on the forgiveness that God freely gives. In contrast, those confessing their sins demonstrate genuine fellowship with God and receive His faithful forgiveness and cleansing (verse 9). Salvation didn't make us sinless; it freed us from sin's condemnation. Denying sin leads to spiritual blindness, but confession leads to restoration of fellowship with God. Verse 10 shifts from present to past sins and confronts those who reject the truth of their sinful history. This denial directly opposes God's Word and exposes a heart that has not internalized His truth. John's message is clear: we must acknowledge sin's presence, agree with God about it through confession, and cling to His Word to maintain authentic fellowship with Him.

QUESTION MARK **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

How do believers today deceive themselves about their fellowship with God, and how can they guard against it?

A Compatible Solution (1 John 2:1-6)

KJV

MY LITTLE children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

NIV

MY DEAR children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

3 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.

4 Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.

5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him:

6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

We all sin . . . no one is exempt. Anyone who claims otherwise is not being honest with themselves or with God. They show a lack of understanding of the Bible and, in effect, call God a liar. John emphasized the reality of sin among believers—not to excuse it, but to warn us to stay alert and guard against it. Even though God desires that we do not sin, John reassures us that if we do, we have someone who speaks to God on our behalf—Jesus Christ, the righteous one (verse 1). Jesus doesn't advocate for us to keep us out of hell; eternal life is already guaranteed to those who trust in Him. Instead, His advocacy is focused on restoring our fellowship with God and keeping us useful for His purposes, even after we've fallen short.

Christ is qualified to advocate for us because He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins—the only one whose sacrificial death for the whole world was sufficient payment for the sin debt separating us from God (verse 2). John further explains that our obedience to God's commands is what determines whether our salvation experience led us to know God intimately (verse 3). Those who claim to know God but fail to obey His commands are liars and out of touch with spiritual reality (verse 4). However, those practicing obedience experience the fullness of God's love as further proof of fellowship with Him, and those claiming to know Him must model their lives after Christ's by obeying His Word (verses 5-6). The solution for avoiding getting on the "wrong path" is obeying God's Word and consistently modeling our lives after Christ's. Even when we do, though, we have an advocate to plead our case when we confess our sins and trust His finished work on the Cross as full payment for them.

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does John's warning—that claiming to know God while refusing to obey Him makes a person a liar—challenge the way we understand faith and grace?

A Closing Thought

This lesson offers several important, relevant truths. First, genuine believers understand they cannot walk in holiness and truth while following sin and darkness simultaneously. Second, claiming fellowship with God while actively practicing sin is self-deception and makes one a liar who does not live by the truth. Third, maintaining fellowship with God and others requires living according to His ways, which brings continual cleansing because of Christ's shed blood. Fourth, refusing to admit our sin is a denial of God's Word and a dangerous form of self-deception. Finally, when we consistently agree with God about our sins, we experience ongoing forgiveness, cleansing, and the assurance of Christ's advocacy. Obedience to God's commands and a life that reflects Christ's character are visible marks of authentic fellowship with Him.

Your Life

God's Word is clear—no one can honestly claim that they do not commit sin. As believers, we must quickly acknowledge and confess sin to maintain our fellowship with the Lord. When we fall short of God's commands, we have an advocate, Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us and the promise of forgiveness and cleansing from unrighteousness as we mature in Christ.

Your World!

Some believers struggle with guilt because they sin. Others wrestle with assurance of their salvation and feel that their fellowship with God is irreparably damaged. Consider using this lesson's focus to encourage someone experiencing either of these spiritual battles to rely on

Christ's advocacy on their behalf when they sin. Remind them of God's promise of forgiveness and continuous cleansing from unrighteousness when they confess their sin.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for Jesus, our advocate, who intercedes for us when we acknowledge and confess our sins and for the promise of forgiveness and continuous cleansing because of Your grace and faithfulness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson explores the only appropriate way to restore a broken relationship with God. Read Luke 15:11-24; Acts 2:38-39.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, January 5	“Turn Away from Sin”	(Ezekiel 18:20-23, 27-32)
TUESDAY, January 6	“Turn toward Righteousness”	(Isaiah 1:10-21)
WEDNESDAY, January 7	“Jesus Has Power to Forgive Sins”	(Mark 2:1-12)
THURSDAY, January 8	“Draw Near to God by Faith”	(Hebrews 11:1-10)
FRIDAY, January 9	“Repent and Seek God’s Face”	(2 Chronicles 7:12-16)
SATURDAY, January 10	“Repent and Be Baptized”	(Acts 2:32-39)
SUNDAY, January 11	“The Prodigal Returns”	(Luke 15:11-24)

Notes