

Part 2 – 1 John 1:5-10

I. Understanding True Fellowship – 1:5-10

A. Vs. 5 – Christ, the Word, had declared and stated some things about God that John wants to make clear:

1. God is light – light speaks of the absolute purity and holiness of God. John tells us in his Gospel that Christ is the light (John 1:4-13). The character and truths of God are embodied in Christ. See also John 3:19-21.

2. In God there is **“no darkness in him at all.”** The double negative in the Greek sentence structure here for “no” strengthens the meaning. John is saying that in God there is not “one bit”, not one part in referring to sin is found in God. God is perfect and morally pure and perfect.

3. With that in mind, the four descriptive words John has used describe an active participation by John and others with the Word of life.

A. Heard – They listened to what the Word said and they came to understand over time what had been said to them.

B. Seen – Though the word can mean “to see with the mind” or “to perceive” something with our mind, it also carries the meaning of “seeing with the eyes”, a physical seeing (John 1:51). B and C are similar but John uses two different words for emphasis.

C. Saw – This means “to look upon” something, to “contemplate” to “view something” attentively. It has the idea of seeing something with our eyes and contemplating it.

D. Touched – This means “to handle, feel.” The disciples, including John, ate with Jesus, probably shook hands with Him. They had a personal relationship with the “Word.”

B. Vs. 6 – Here begins a critical understanding of John’s thought in his letter:

1. His use of the word “we” in vs. 6 is what is known as an editorial statement. Often writers would use a word that connects them with their audience to help make a point, to identify with them.

2. To state that we have fellowship with God, which will be expounded on in vs. 7, and yet live in darkness (referring to living like someone who does not know Christ), makes people liars, and they are not living in the truth.

A. “Living” indicates the way one conducts their life. It describes a lifestyle.

B. “Darkness” in John’s writings always refers to the unsaved world (John 3:19-21; John 8:12; John 12:35-36). The present tense verb of “living in darkness” indicates that the person who is continually living in darkness is living a lie.

C. The fact is that by making the false claim about a relationship with Christ, yet live differently than Christ wants us to, shows that we are liars. Being in the middle voice in the Greek language, this “living” shows also that we are actively participating in this lie by living in

darkness. The word for “lying” describes someone who “speaks deliberate falsehoods, who shows themselves deceitful.”

D. It describes someone not living right as a lifestyle, living the truth of God – compare this verse with 1 John 3:4-10.

C. Vs. 7 – Remember that vs. 6 talked specifically about someone who is living in darkness, most likely an unsaved person. It stated this person was a “liar” and not “living” the truth.

1. Here the opposite of vs. 6 is stated. Note that our relationship is seen as “living in the light.” This is the opposite of the previous verse. John’s use of the word “light” regarding believers may help us understand what is being said.

- A. When John uses the word “light” to refer to people, it always deals with believers.
 1. John 8:12 – Those who follow Christ shall have the “light that leads to life.”
 2. John 11:9-10 – Here those who are believers have the “light of this world” in them.
 3. John 12:35-36 – We as believers are called “children of the light.”
 4. John 12:45-46 – Here we see that those who know Christ do not “remain in the dark.”

2. If we are living in the light (saving relationship) then we have fellowship with “one another”, and His blood (the blood of Christ) continually cleanses us from sin.

A. The “fellowship” described here is either regarding our relationship with God or with other believers. I believe the context indicates that it is talking about “fellowship with God”, which is only possible as saved individuals.

1. Can our “fellowship” with each other be broken? – Yes, see Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5.
2. Can our “fellowship” with God be broken? It depends on how we see “fellowship”.

A. When this word is used to describe our relationship with God, it is never used in a conditional sense. It is always tied in with our standing “in Christ” outside of ourselves. For evidence of this, see 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14.

3. If we are in “fellowship” with God, the blood of Christ is continually cleansing us from sin.

A. The word “cleanses” is in the present tense, describing something that is ongoing. Verse 7 speaks of the person who is saved, thus the blood of Christ continually “cleanses” them from sin’s guilt.

B. “Forgiveness of sins” is a past tense fact. That means that we were forgiven at the time we accepted Christ and in some cases, the verb tense for “forgiveness” indicates that we were forgiven and are still forgiven. See Rom. 4:7-8; Col. 2:9-11; 1 John 2:12-14; Eph. 4:32; Col. 1:14.

C. Because of our relationship with Christ, His blood continually cleanses us, indicating that all our sins have been forgiven.

4. According to this verse then, those who are “living in the light” are children of God and thus have “fellowship” with God, and in turn, with one another.

D. Vs. 8 – This verse builds on vs. 7 and leads us into vss. 9-10

1. This is pointed to the person who says, “I have no sin nature”, thus “I do not sin.” John says this person is “fooling” or “deceiving” themselves, and refuses to accept the truth. The Gnostics claimed to have absolutely no sin. John refutes them in this verse.

A. “Truth” is another important word in the vocabulary of John. When speaking about the believer’s relationship with God, “truth” only refers to the Christian:

1. John 3:21 – Whoever does the truth comes to the Light.
2. John 8:44 – The devil is not in the truth, and there is no truth in him.
3. John 14:17; John 15:26; John 16:13 – The Holy Spirit is called the “Spirit of truth.” If Christians, we are indwelt by the “Spirit of truth.”
4. John 18:37 – Everyone who is of the truth hears the voice of Christ.
5. 2 John 1-3 – John is very clear that the “truth” lives in us.

2. The persons claiming to have no sin are “refusing to accept the truth” or “fooling” themselves. 2 Peter 2:15 speaks of unbelievers being led astray.

E. Vs. 9 – This verse has often been used to deal with a Christian’s sin. Is that really what this verse is teaching based on the context of 1 John?

1. As mentioned at the beginning of the study, how we approach 1 John will determine in many ways how we interpret this passage. If 1 John is a book about a Christian’s “fellowship” with God and other believers, then this verse will most likely be dealing with a Christian.

2. If we approach the book as more of a discussion about true and false “believers”, 1 John 1:9 may be not a verse necessarily dealing with believers, but a verse that deals with salvation.

3. Let us deal with this verse and see what we can learn:

A. The word “confess” does mean “to agree with” someone about something. In the context of 1 John, John has stated the people in 1 John 1:6 had lied, those in vs. 8 had fooled themselves, and why? Because they claimed to have no sin. Verse 9 follows on the heels of that discussion.

B. The word “confess”, though, in most uses, means “to declare freely” or “to speak openly.” For example, this is how it is used in Rom. 10:9-10, for example. Note also 1 John 4:15 for the same usage.

C. In the context, it seems that John is saying that if a person will acknowledge that they have sinned, and will confess it (in response to vs. 8), then God will forgive and cleanse them from all unrighteousness.

D. Forgiveness, as we have already seen, is something that happens the moment we are saved. This is the only verse that deals with confession and forgiveness for fellowship with God

that you can find in the New Testament. James 5:16, a similar verse, deals with sins among each other, not necessarily directed at God.

4. With that in mind, then what should a believer do when they sin?

A. They must understand that their sin grieves God (Eph. 4:30) and quenches the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19).

B. They must acknowledge that sin and repent (Revelation 2 and 3. The churches in Revelation were called to “repent” of their sin). This means not only an admission of sin, but a turning from it, a willingness to change.

C. They must recognize that they have been forgiven of this sin already, thank God for this forgiveness, and realize that this very fact of being forgiven should make us reconsider our actions of sin.

D. The believer that understands their relationship with Christ will want to make Romans 6 real in their life.

** Possibly part of the problem of understanding forgiveness and dealing with sins is a faulty illustration when we compare our Heavenly Father with earthly fathers. It is said that we can still be part of a family when we mess up, and break fellowship with our earthly father, for example, and retain our place as a child but we have broken fellowship. God, though, brings us into a relationship with Him where, yes, our sin grieves Him, but we are never “out of the sight” of God. Illustrations that try to compare earthly parents to God usually have some weak points in them.

F. Vs. 10 – Now, this verse is still in context of vss. 5-10. Here we meet another individual who made a claim that simply was not true.

1. The perfect tense “we have not sinned” indicates that this person had made this claim at some time in their life, and they were still making it. It was an ongoing thing, a belief that they no longer sinned. Note what John says about them.

2. By making this claim, they call God a liar. Why does this make God a liar? Because God says all have sinned – Rom. 3:10-23; Rom. 5:12-21.

3. Note also that John says that these individuals do not have “God’s Word” in their heart. The Scriptures teach that believers have the Word of God “in them” – See John 5:31-38; John 8:31-36; John 17:6. Those who belong to Christ also “keep” the Word of God, it is seen in their life.

4. Vs. 10 is an obvious reference, based on the ongoing context of 1 John 1, to the unsaved.

** John has been dealing with false professors of faith, those who were not true believers.

Questions To Think On:

1. What is it that John mentions is our reason for having fellowship? (**1 John 1:3-4; 1 John 1:7**). What is fellowship? What is the basis of Christian fellowship? What are the requirements of Christian fellowship?
2. What are the two claims that people make about themselves according to **1 John 1:8, 10** and describe these claims in our words? And how do people deny or rationalize their sins?
3. Refer to **1 John 1:7**. What does it mean to walk in the light? Refer to **1 John 1:5**. What does it mean that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all? Refer to **1 John 1:6-7**. Do we check our thoughts and actions in light of the light?
4. Read **1 John 1:9**. In Revelation 2-3 the churches in Revelation are called to repent. Is there a difference in confessing and repenting? If our sins are already forgiven, why do we seek forgiveness?