

Series: The Confident, Loving Church – week 3

CDOBC – beginning on 2/14/10

Title: “No Gray Area” part 2

1 John 1:6-7 ~ March 7, 2010

OBJECTIVE: To help us understand the nature of God, and the nature of the Christian life – to walk in the light.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- AWANA Urgent Need!!!! Cubbies leader / director needed – 8 more weeks
- SWCBA Annual Celebration – March 13
- Also on March 13 – Men’s Breakfast – Passion of the Christ 4:00 p.m..
- All-Church Work Day – March 27th – sign-up in courtyard

Opening Prayer

Illus. – Dad at U of A vs. ASU football game (2003?) wearing an ASU hat and U of A t-shirt.

Faith and lifestyle should agree. vs. 6

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

In this section, John begins to address some of the false beliefs that were gaining ground in the churches. He begins each one with the phrase “If we claim” (here, vs. 8, 10). This morning, we will address the first false belief – that someone can claim to be in fellowship with God, yet pursue a life of sin – a life that enjoys evil.

Is this verse referring to believers who are out of fellowship – or to unbelievers who have a counterfeit or invalid claim of faith?

I believe it is speaking primarily to believers, and I believe this for three primary reasons.

1. As we saw a few weeks ago, John uses the term “brothers” 15 times in this letter – and his statement in **5:13** “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God”. He also uses the phrase “My dear children” a handful of times. The purpose of the letter is to help correct the false teaching that was misleading the believers in the churches, and was causing them great uncertainty about their faith. The purpose is not to evangelize non-believers as was John’s Gospel, but to encourage, correct, and strengthen the saved.

2. It would be very confusing if John was writing for a few verses to the believers in the church, and then to switch and write to non-believers without making a clear break / distinction.

3. The plural “we” in verses 6 & 7. John is including himself in the conditional situation of each verse. If he was writing to unbelievers, he would not include himself in the scenario – but he would have used the word “you” or some other 2nd person reference.

Let’s make sure we understand the terms being used here... “Fellowship” does not = faith / salvation. Of course, we may refer to a church or believers as *“those who are in the fellowship”* – but that is not how the term is being used here. There is no definite article in the Greek which would make that distinction.

“do not live by the truth” does not mean they are not saved – it means they are not living according to God’s truth – according to what He commands.

“If we claim/say” – (aorist active subjunctive verb) – a conditional statement that no doubt was being voiced by some in the church. The false teachers would have been saying this and teaching that this dichotomy was OK, normal, and expected. But John was not writing primarily to the false teachers, but to help the lay people in the churches to understand the truth of the Gospel – the truth of what Jesus taught. So, they were struggling with the question, *‘Can you have fellowship with God and yet live a life focused on sin and evil?’* John, with great clarity, answers, **“No”**. He calls this idea a “lie”, and that those who live like this are living a lie.

What John is not saying is that if you are a believer and you fall into sin, that you lose your salvation. This will become clear in the following verses. John is speaking here of your fellowship with God – your ongoing relationship with God – not your position of being justified before Him. This is an issue of sanctification – not of justification.

Now – to be sure – there is an aspect of what John is saying here that can be applied to those who really don’t have faith in Christ, but simply spoke the language of faith – the language of conversion – **“I gave my life to Christ”** – **“I believe in Jesus”** – **“I put my trust in Christ”**. Salvation is not received if we happen to utter some magical phrase! God doesn’t operate on the basis of special sayings and formulas. Faith is expressed with our mouth – but it’s an issue of the heart – and only God knows a persons heart.

Rom. 10:9-10

“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

Remember that John was trying to correct the false teaching of Gnosticism – teaching that denied the humanity of Jesus

and taught that since matter / flesh was evil, it didn't matter what you did with your body – the only thing that mattered was what you believed. The Gnostics taught that your relationship and partnership with God was not affected at all by sin. So, John addresses the false belief head-on. Now today, there are many – especially in the western world – who claim to be Christians, but their life is completely immersed in the world – in darkness. John is addressing those who don't think their faith should affect their lifestyle and their attitudes. There is no gray area here. God calls us who are His children to walk in the light – not in darkness.

The blessings of walking in the light. vs. 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.”

Once again, we have a conditional statement – “if we walk in the light”. This is yet another reason why I believe John is addressing believers, not unbelievers. Walking in the light involves faith in the promises of God and obedience to the commands of God – so this is a spiritual work – and we know that salvation is through faith alone – not by works.

This verse does not describe someone converting to Christ. It is describing the spiritual work of a believer that results in spiritual blessings. The blessings comes as a result of faithful living.

So, just like vs. 6 was not referring to initial salvation / justification, John is speaking here of the spiritual growth – the sanctification of a believer. When we live according to

God's truth, when we adhere to the moral and ethical commands of Scripture, we will be blessed in two ways:

First, we are blessed in Christian *fellowship*.

When you are living a righteous life – as other believers are also doing, this will lead to deeper fellowship.

True fellowship is through common devotion not common words.

As a Christian, the bond of fellowship is greater with others who are walking in the light. The shared experiences of living the Christian life lead to a deeper level of fellowship.

Second, we are blessed by our *sin* being *cleansed*.

Greek – *katharizai* - **present active indicative verb**

English: Catharsis/cathartic

Significance of the **present, active indicative verb** form is that the cleansing John speaks of is **Present tense**: ongoing action – a daily action in our life. **Active voice**: Jesus' blood is performing the action. **Indicative mood**: is a statement of fact – a certainty of what is being said. So, for the believer who is walking in the light, the blood of Christ will, daily, if we do certain things, cleanse / purify us – and this is a fact – it's not up for debate.

The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin – this is not a reference to our initial conversion – although it is certainly true of our initial conversion. Remember, John is writing to believers – so is John saying that when we come to faith that all of our sins are not forgiven?

No.

At conversion – all your sins – past, present, and future are all forgiven. At conversion, you are adopted into the family of God, the Holy Spirit indwells you, your salvation is sealed,

you receive at least one spiritual gift...there is so much that happens to you and for you – and none of it is irrevocable! It is all a gift from God, when we have faith in Jesus’ sacrifice. John is not speaking of that initial, original forgiveness or cleansing at conversion. He is speaking of ongoing, daily cleansing or purification from sin that is part of our sanctification – part of our growing as believers – part of our maturing in the faith.

Some other passages may help us to understand this ongoing cleansing / purifying that we all need.

Turn to John 13:6-10

“He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."

More thoughts on our cleansing...

Hebrews 9:14 – “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”

“How much more, then...” – refers to the cleansing of our conscience – of the taking away of our guilt! Verse 13 of Hebrews 9 speaks of the blood of goats and bulls and how those sacrifices in the Mosaic system cleansed people outwardly. But the blood of Christ – which is so much more

powerful than the blood of goats and bulls – can cleanse us not only on the outside, but on the inside.

When we “walk in the light”, we enable the blood of Christ to cleanse our guilty conscience. When we come to faith, all our sins are forgiven, but we begin to battle our sin nature and we sin even though we are saved. All those sins are forgiven, but they will impede our daily relationship with God.

“When sinners by grace through faith in Christ are regenerated by God's Spirit, a glorious aspect of that regeneration is that we are given a clean conscience. Unfortunately, we still live in bodies of sin and walk in a sinful world and inevitably our consciences become "contaminated" by the sins we commit in thought, word and deed. And yet the same blood of Christ that provided for our entry into so great a salvation, is ever available (and necessary) for the maintenance of such a great salvation.”

(Source: http://preceptaustin.org/hebrews_913-14.htm#9:14)

There's Power in the Blood

By: Lewis E. Jones, 1899

1. Would you be free from the burden of sin?
There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood;
Would you o'er evil a victory win?
There's wonderful pow'r in the blood.
○ Refrain:
*There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder-working pow'r
In the blood of the Lamb;
There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder-working pow'r
In the precious blood of the Lamb.*
2. Would you be free from your passion and pride?
There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood;
Come for a cleansing to Calvary's tide;
There's wonderful pow'r in the blood.
3. Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow?
There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood;
Sin-stains are lost in its life-giving flow;
There's wonderful pow'r in the blood.
4. Would you do service for Jesus your King?
There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood;
Would you live daily His praises to sing?
There's wonderful pow'r in the blood.

1 Cor. 15:56-57

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

What does Paul mean when he says that the power of sin is the law? It means that when I sin, the law condemns me – it reveals my guilt – and I stand without excuse. So the full power of sin, the guilt and pain of sin, is directly connected to the law because the law shows me my sin!

But the cleansing nature of the blood of Jesus is not only active at our conversion – at our justification, but it’s a continual work in our life so that the sins we commit after coming to faith – the sins we commit as we do our best to walk in the light of God – do not condemn us before God, but we are daily cleansed by the blood of Christ!

57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“But if we walk in the light...” (**present active indicative verb**) –

Unlike our eternal forgiveness which is by faith, this cleansing / purifying is through our works – our walking in the light.

This verse not only instructs us to walk in the light – but informs us of the blessings we receive when we obey this command.

Another vital point that John reminds us of here is that human will-power is not how we gain victory over sin – human will-power is not how we walk in the light – our fellowship with God and with each other is not based on human will power or human determination – it’s based on the blood of Jesus. The power of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection is not limited to our justification – it’s also for

our sanctification – for our daily walk in the light of His truth in which we fight against and resist the temptations in our midst.

Stott's summary is excellent: *"What is clear is that if we walk in the light, God has made provision to cleanse us from whatever sin would otherwise mar our fellowship with Him or each other"* (p. 76). Expositor's Bible Commentary

Application

God commands your faith to impact your lifestyle.

Too many Christians have settled for God's justification of their life – of their sin – but have not welcomed God's sanctification in their life.

They have claimed to have fellowship with God, but they live in darkness.

One possibility is that this person may not have legitimate faith! However, there is great danger in judging the legitimacy of someone's faith. It's best to encourage them with God's Word – that if they claim to have faith or fellowship with God, their life should be lived in the light – not darkness.

Claiming faith – or claiming to have fellowship with God and living in darkness is wrong...it's living a lie. God calls each believer to live in the light so fellowship and cleansing can be experienced to their fullest extent.

Encourage each other to walk in the light.

This is another aspect of our Christian fellowship – to not only partner with one another in sharing the Gospel, but to help each other to walk in the light. We are partners in life – partners with one another in our common call to sanctification. This is difficult...we need to encourage each other with love, gentleness, and

grace as we point out to each other areas of darkness in our life.

Close in prayer – salvation prayer / re-dedication prayer