

**1 John 1:5-6, 8, 10. “Measure your Faith” (p.959)**  
**Ajax Alliance Church. Sunday April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.**

**1 John 1:5-6, 8, 10.** <sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (<sup>7</sup> 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 cleanses us from all sin.) <sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.) <sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (ESV)

Ever since the fall, **humanity has tried to deny the reality of sin**, even though every human being is innately aware of its presence. (cf. Rom. 2:14-16). **People today minimize and redefine sin, often alleging that the “failures” of their lives and certain “disorders” exist because of how others have treated them. The victim mentality reigns supreme as popular culture comforts itself in affirming that people are basically good and whatever may be wrong is not really wrong, but merely a preference of personal freedom. Instead of accepting responsibility for their behavior, people demand to be accepted as they are.** They reclassify serious and heart issues “illnesses” and “addictions” and try to “cure” them with prescription drugs and psychotherapy. But because that fails to deal with sin, the actual root cause of the problem, society goes from bad to worse. **Jesus said that every person is sinful at the very core of his or her being** (Mark 7:20–23; cf. Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; James 1:15; 4:1). **Many in the church today seem to be reluctant to make the diagnosis Jesus did, for fear they might offend someone or be deemed “unloving.”** Thus, **sin is explained away in culturally acceptable terms.**

**The apostle John faced a similar situation in the churches to whom he wrote his letter. Flooding into Ephesus and the other cities and churches of Asia Minor were deceitful, sin-denying false teachers** (cf. 2:18; 4:1–3; 2 Peter 2:1–2; Jude 4). **John had to contend with Greek philosophical dualism** (the basis of Gnosticism)—a view that **denied the reality of sin and evil. Those who held to this mystical, elitist philosophy argued the spiritual was always good and the physical was always bad; they therefore created an artificial dichotomy between the spiritual realm and the physical world—contending that spiritual realities were all that mattered, and that what was done in the flesh (including sin) was a nonissue. Having written of fellowship and joy in Christ, John raises three false claims that have been made by the Docetists:** that sin does not matter (1:6); that it is not a part of our nature (1:8) and that it is not a part of our conduct (1:10) (Barnes, P. (1998). *Knowing Where We Stand: The Message of John’s Epistles* (p. 19). Darlington, England: Evangelical Press.)

**In order to protect against false teaching, people must test what they read, hear and see in order to distinguish what is true from counterfeit. Making that fundamental distinction is essential to the church’s protection and spiritual growth. Wheat must be differentiated from the tares (cf. Matt. 13:24–30), the sheep distinguished from the goats, or people will never be protected from the deadly deceptions of false teachers.**

In these verses, **John presents two crucial doctrinal tests to determine who is genuine.** In order to *Measure your Faith* properly **one must have: 1) An accurate belief in the nature of God** (1 John 1:5), and **2) A genuine belief in the certainty of sin** (1 John 1:6, 8, 10)

In order to *Measure your Faith* properly **one must have an accurate belief in:**

**1) The Nature of God** (1 John 1:5)

**1 John 1:5.** <sup>5</sup>This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. (ESV)

The message, preached by John and the other apostles, was one they heard from Him [Jesus] and would proclaim/announce to their audience. That they have "heard" is in the perfect tense to indicate that their hearing in the past is still effective in the present. The pronoun **him** refers back to "his Son Jesus Christ" in **v. 3** (Haas, C., Jonge, M. de, & Swellengrebel, J. L. (1994). *A handbook on the letters of John* (p. 22). New York: United Bible Societies.).

As God in human flesh (John 1:1–4, 18; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 1 John 5:20; cf. John 4:26; 8:24, 28, 58; 18:5), Jesus Christ is the perfect source of revelation regarding the nature and character of God. "I am the Light of the world," Jesus declared; "he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12; cf. 12:45–46). God, the source of true light, bestows it on believers in the form of eternal life through His Son, who is the light incarnate. God is light in the sense that He is life, and He is the source and sustainer of both physical and spiritual life. Jesus identified himself as the light of the world (Jn. 8:12; 9:5; cf. 12:35f., 46), and Matthew tells us how he commanded his disciples to take up the same role (Mt. 5:14–16) (Marshall, I. H. (1978). *The Epistles of John* (p. 109). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.)

Please turn to 2 Corinthians 4 (p.907)

The gospel illumines how Christ's death on the cross makes it possible for God's people to be in his presence, having been transformed by God's presence and not destroyed by it (see 3:18). This is described in Second Corinthians 4:4–6 which summarizes well the importance of God as light and its role in a Christian's life: 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup>But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup>For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (ESV). (cf. Matt. 5:14–16; Eph. 5:8–10; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:12–13; 1 Peter 2:9)

- In **2 Cor. 4:6** Paul refers to the **provision of light** as mentioned in **Gen. 1:3** to **picture conversion** as the dawning of the new creation amid this **fallen** and **dark** world. **To know the glory of Christ** (2 Cor. 4:4) is to **encounter the life-transforming glory of God** (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 2228). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.).

**Scripture reveals two fundamental principles** that flow from the foundational truth that **God is light**. **First, light represents the truth of God, as embodied in His Word.** **The psalmist wrote these familiar words:** “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.... The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple” (**Ps. 119:105**, 130; cf. Prov. 6:23; 2 Peter 1:19). **The light and life of God are inherently connected to and characterized by truth.** **Second, Scripture also links light with virtue and moral conduct.** **The apostle Paul instructed the Ephesians,** “You were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)” (Eph. 5:8–9; cf. Isa. 5:20; Rom. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:5–6). Therefore, the declaration, “**God is light**” (ὁ θεός φῶς ἐστίν), is **a penetrating description of the being and nature of God: it means that he is absolute in his glory (the physical connotation of light), in his truth (the intellectual) and in his holiness (the moral)** (Smalley, S. S. (1989). *1, 2, 3 John* (Vol. 51, p. 20). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.).

**Those essential properties of divine light and life** are crucial in **distinguishing** genuine faith from a **counterfeit** claim. **If one professes to possess the Light** and to dwell in it—to have received eternal life—such a person will show evidence of spiritual life by their devotion both to truth and to righteousness. **If truth and righteousness are absent** from one’s life, that person, **no** matter what he or she says, does **not** possess eternal life (Matt. 7:17–18, 21–23; 25:41–46). **They cannot belong to God, because in Him is no darkness at all. God is absolutely perfect in truth and holiness** (Ex. 15:11; 1 Sam. 2:2; Pss. 22:3; 48:10; 71:19; 98:2; Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8; 15:4). **God is pure light, not diluted or mixed in any way with evil, hatred, untruth, ignorance or hostility** (Thompson, M. M. (1992). *1–3 John*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.)

**Illustration:** Light

In his book, **The Chemistry of the Blood**, **M. R. DeHaan, makes a creative application to that fact that “God is light,” about the Trinity.** A scientific analysis of sunlight reveals that it consists of three kinds of rays: 1. **Chemical rays** or actinic. These rays are invisible and can **neither** be seen or felt. 2. **Light rays.** These rays can be seen but **never** felt. 3. **Heat rays.** These rays are felt but **never** seen. **DeHaan writes,** “**God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. We know the Godhead consists of Three Persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father corresponds to the chemical rays of sunlight; No man hath seen God at any time. The Son, who is the light of the world, corresponds to the light rays, the One whom we can see but not feel. The Holy Spirit corresponds to the heat rays, since He is felt in the lives of believers but never seen.**” (M. R. DeHaan, *The Chemistry of the Blood* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1943), 66.)

**Finally, in order to Measure your Faith properly one must have an accurate belief in:**

**2) The Certainty of Sin** (1 John 1:6, 8, 10)

**1 John 1:6, 8, 10** <sup>6</sup> If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (<sup>7</sup> 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 cleanses us from all sin.)  
<sup>8</sup> **If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.** (<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.) <sup>10</sup> **If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.** (ESV)

**John divided those who claimed to be in the fellowship but rejected the truth into three similar but distinct categories:** those in darkness, those in deception, and those who defame God. **All three groups of people either willfully rejected or completely ignored the reality that true believers and sin are incompatible.** (cf. Rom 6:2, 17–18; Eph. 2:1–5). By **refusing to repent, these sin-denying false professors revealed that they were outside of God’s plan of salvation,** which begins with election (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4, 11); **includes redemption** (1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:12), **sanctification** (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26–27; Phil. 2:12–13), **and spiritual growth** (John 16:13; 17:17; cf. 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 3:15); and **culminates with glorification** (2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Thess. 2:14; 2 Tim. 2:10).

**The first category of false professors** consists of those who **ignored** their sin as if it were **not** a reality to them. **They claimed to have fellowship with God,** to share common aspects of life with **Him,** that is, **eternal life** (cf. John 17:3). **The heretics claimed that fellowship was based on knowledge only.** This was an aspect of Greek philosophy from Plato. However, **John asserts that Christians must live Christlike lives** (cf. v. 7; Lev. 19:2; 20:7; Matt. 5:48) (Utley, R. J. (1999). *The Beloved Disciple’s Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, I, II, and III John* (Vol. Volume 4, p. 197). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.).

**The claim of fellowship is meaningless if one continues to walk in darkness. Walk refers to manner of life or conduct** (Rom. 8:4; cf. 13:13; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; see also Deut. 10:12–13; Ps. 119:1; Mic. 6:8). This person is said to be walking in the darkness which is not in God, namely, **sin. The verb is present subjunctive which speaks of habitual action.** Thus, **this person is sinning habitually, continuously, which shows** that he is **an unsaved person. No child of God sins habitually to the exclusion of righteous acts** (Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (1 Jn 1:6). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.)

**For one to profess one thing and live in contradiction to it is to lie and not practice the truth. When the truth of God’s revelation is accepted by the believer, it becomes the basis from which that person lives;** and **if one acts in truth ... , one is not simply following an outside model of what is right ... but is acting from an interior principle**” (1982: 199–200). **According to John, some people’s lives show how they have never internalized this principle that God is light or other aspects of truth associated with the incarnation** (McDermond, J. E. (2011). *1, 2, 3 John* (pp. 62–63). Harrisonburg, VA; Waterloo, ON: Herald Press.).

**Therefore, to ‘practice/do the truth’ relates to action, and conduct and feeling, as well as to word and thought.**” (F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation* (Vol. 12, p. 310). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House Barker, G. W. (1981).)

Please turn to James 1 (p.950)

**Believers possess** God's life, are new creations in Christ made for good works (1 John 5:20; Rom. 6:11–17; 8:1–2; 12:5; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:21; 5:17; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:27–28), and have the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:14). Thus they **cannot** ignore the existence of personal iniquity and walk in darkness (cf. Col. 1:12–14). **No** matter what anyone claims for themselves, **the genuineness of faith** can always be seen in one's life by the love of righteousness (Matt. 7:15–20).

**Those who really embrace the truth heed James's admonition:**

**James 1:22-25.** <sup>22</sup> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. <sup>24</sup> For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. <sup>25</sup> But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (ESV)

- **Looking intently at his natural face in a mirror** and then **forgetting** what he was like **demonstrates** the **folly** of examining oneself in God's "mirror" of the "implanted word" (v. 21) and then **doing nothing** about it (v. 22). **When one sees imperfections** (as when looking in a mirror), **common sense says something should be done about it** (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 2392). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.).
- **If a profession of faith in Christ** does **not** result in a **changed life** that hungers and thirsts for God's Word and desires to obey that Word, **the profession** is only that—a mere profession. **Satan, of course, loves such professions**, because they give church members the **damning notion that they are saved** when they are **not**. **They still belong to him, not to God** (MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). *James* (pp. 83–84). Chicago: Moody Press.)

**A second group of false professors** claimed, as recorded in **verse 8**, to **have no sin**. **This position** was **prouder** than the stance of those in **the first category** who ignored their sin (cf. Jer. 17:9). **There are two kinds** of **sin**—doing those things we ought **not** to do and **not** doing those things we should do. **The longer we walk with Christ**, the more likely it is that we will put aside more and more of the things we ought not to do. (Walls, D., & Anders, M. (1999). *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude* (Vol. 11, p. 157). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.).

**But any who claim to have reached a higher spiritual plane**, where **sin no longer exists** in their lives, completely **misunderstand** their condition and the Spirit's work of progressive sanctification. John's affirmation is equally **applicable today** to those who deny the fact or guilt of sin by **seeking to interpret it solely in terms of physiological, psychological or social causes** (Stott, J. R. W. (1988). *The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Vol. 19, p. 82). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.).

Please turn to Romans 3 (p.884)

**Any who ignore the existence of sin** give clear evidence that **the truth is not in** them. **The Bible plainly teaches the principle of human depravity** (cf. Gen. 8:21; 2 Chron. 6:36; Ps. 51:5; Jer. 13:23; Rom. 8:7–8; 1 Cor. 2:14; Titus 3:3) **Jesus Christ** was **the only human being who could ever legitimately claim to be without sin** (Heb. 4:15). **All others** who make such an outlandish claim are only **fooling** themselves. It is **not** until believers are **glorified in heaven** that their sanctification process will be complete (**Rom. 8:19, 23**), and then they will be **without sin**. **If we do not admit our sin**, it remains unconfessed and **unforgiven**, and hence **the truth is not in** us. **The temptation to deny one's sin** is common to both the non-Christian and the Christian (Marshall, I. H. (1978). *The Epistles of John* (p. 113). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.)

**The Apostle Paul speaks of the clear universality of sin:**

**Romans 3:10-23** <sup>10</sup> as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; <sup>11</sup> no one understands; no one seeks for God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”<sup>13</sup> “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.”<sup>14</sup> “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” <sup>15</sup> “Their feet are swift to shed blood; <sup>16</sup> in their paths are ruin and misery, <sup>17</sup> and the way of peace they have not known.” <sup>18</sup> “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” <sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup> For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. <sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (ESV)

- When Paul says **none** is righteous, **no** one seeks for God, and **no** one does good, **he means** that **no** human being on their own **seeks for God or does any good that merits salvation**. **The law required perfect obedience to God's will**. **All people sin and fall short** of this standard, therefore **no one** is justified by the law. **Justified** is a legal term and indicates that **no one will be declared to be righteous by God**, who is **the divine judge by virtue of his own goodness**, since **all violate** and **none** fulfill God's requirements (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 2162-3). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.)

**The list of those who deny the certainty of sin culminates with a third group**, as recorded in **verse 10**, as those who not only **claim not** to sin now, but who **say that** they **have never sinned**. **By making that ridiculous assertion** they **blasphemously make God a liar** (cf. Titus 1:2; 1 John 5:10–11) in two ways. **First, they explicitly deny His teaching that all have sinned (Romans 3:10–23)**, and **second, they implicitly deny the need for a Savior** (cf. Isa. 53:10–11; Zech. 9:9; Matt. 1:21; Luke 2:11; 19:10; Acts 5:31; 13:38–39; Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb. 5:9). After all, **why would they need a Substitute to take their punishment for something they claim to have never committed?** The Greek verb translated *we have not sinned* indicates a **denial** in the past that continues to the present. Unlike **v. 8**, which speaks of the guilt of sin or a sinful nature, **this verse** is about the **denial** of any particular sins. **To make this denial is to call God a liar** because **God's**

**word emphasizes the penetrating nature of sin** (cf. (1 Kings 8:46; Ps. 14:3; Isa. 53:6; 64:6; Rom. 3:23; 7:14–24) (Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1997). *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (1 Jn 1:10). T. Nelson Publishers.)

**All three categories of false claimants to fellowship with God fail John's second doctrinal test by denying sin's certainty.** Thus they prove that **His word** [truth] **is not in them.** **When John says** that "God's **word is not in us,**" this is **not** a denial of salvation, but **recognition that God's Word** is **not** impacting that person's life. It is **not** "influencing" the one who denies sin in **the face of what God has said.** John literally says that God's Word is not **in us.** This is likely an ellipsis with the verb μένω purposefully left out for emphasis. **Thus, he is saying that God's Word** is **not** abiding in the person who denies sin. **This reflects Jesus' teaching in the Upper Room** where **He promised answered prayer to those in whom His Word abides** and who are **abiding in Him (John 15:7).** In both instances the meaning of abiding is not just "to exist in." It is not that a person knows Jesus' words. But rather, **abiding carries the double sense of presence and influence.** **Jesus' words** are at **the forefront of that person's mind and memory** and thereby **influencing him or her.** In this same way, **John is saying here** that **the one who denies sin,** and thereby a need to confess sin, is **not** being influenced by the Word of God. This explains why he or she is **denying** what God has said about his or her **sinfulness.** (Derickson, G. W. (2012). *First, Second, and Third John* (pp. 112–113). Lexham Press.)

**Anyone, even a professed believer seeking to cover up his or her sin,** is in the depths of spiritual **darkness** and **deception,** and **blasphemes** God. Conversely, **when those truly in the fellowship** fall into sin, they do **not** deny sin's presence or their propensity toward it (Rom. 7:14–25; 1 Tim. 1:12–15; cf. Pss. 32:5; 51:1, 3; Prov. 28:13). Instead, **they openly and honestly confess their sins** before the Lord and repent of them. **The true Measure of Faith** is **not** what is claimed, but **genuine repentance and belief shown forth in word and deed.**

(Format Note: Outline & some base commentary from MacArthur, J. (2007). *1, 2, 3 John* (pp. 21–31). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.)