

So That We May Not Sin

The following is a summary of Kellen Blythe's July 13, 2025 Sermon on 1 John 1:4-2:1.

In our journey of faith, we often grapple with difficult questions about sin, forgiveness, and our relationship with God. How can we have fellowship with a perfect, holy God when we are imperfect and prone to sin? What does it mean to "walk in the light" as believers? And how do we reconcile our identity as both sinners and saints?

The book of 1 John offers profound insights into these questions, particularly in the passage of 1 John 1:4-2:1. This powerful section of scripture challenges us to confront our misconceptions about sin and embrace the transformative power of God's grace.

At the heart of this passage is a fundamental truth: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). This isn't just poetic language – it's a declaration of God's absolute perfection and holiness. Like a brilliant light that dispels every shadow, God's nature is pure goodness, without even a trace of evil.

This image of God's perfect light sets the stage for understanding our own relationship with sin. It's a stark contrast that should make us pause and reflect. How can we, as imperfect beings, hope to have fellowship with such a holy God?

The passage goes on to address three common misconceptions – lies we often tell ourselves about sin:

1. "I can have fellowship with God and still live a sinful life."
2. "I am not guilty of sin."
3. "I have no sin to deal with."

Each of these lies represents a flawed understanding of our relationship with sin and with God. They're the kind of self-deceptions that can lead us down a dangerous path, away from true fellowship with God and into spiritual complacency.

But here's the good news: the apostle John doesn't just point out these lies – he offers the liberating truth to counter each one.

To those who think they can walk in darkness and still have fellowship with God, John says, "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (1 John 1:6). This is a wake-up call to those who claim to be Christians but show no evidence of transformation in their lives. True fellowship with God will inevitably lead to a change in behavior – a desire to "walk in the light" as God is in the light.

For those who deny their guilt or the reality of sin in their lives, John offers a sobering reminder: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). This cuts to the heart of our human tendency to minimize our faults or compare ourselves favorably to others. The truth is, we all fall short of God's perfect standard.

But it's the third truth that offers the most hope and the key to understanding our relationship with sin as believers: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

This verse is a powerful reminder of God's grace and our responsibility. It acknowledges the reality of our ongoing struggle with sin, even as believers, but it also points us to the solution: confession and God's faithful forgiveness.

The imagery of cleansing is particularly poignant. Just as a high-quality water filter can remove impurities and leave water pure and clean, the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin. It's not a partial cleansing – it's complete and thorough, addressing not just our sinful actions, but the very nature of sin within us.

This truth should fill us with joy and gratitude. As the hymn writer Horatio Spafford beautifully expressed:

"My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part, but the whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more; Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!"

Understanding this truth transforms how we view our relationship with sin. We're no longer trapped in a cycle of trying to earn God's favor through good deeds or living in denial about our sinfulness. Instead, we're invited into a continuous process of walking in the light, confessing our sins, and experiencing God's faithful forgiveness.

This doesn't mean we take sin lightly – quite the opposite. A genuine believer will find it "agonizingly uncomfortable" to walk in darkness. The Holy Spirit within us compels us towards confession and repentance. But we do so not out of fear or shame, but out of a desire for deeper fellowship with God and the joy of experiencing His forgiveness.

As we reflect on these truths, we're challenged to examine our own lives:

- Are we truly walking in the light, or are we trying to maintain a facade of righteousness while hiding areas of darkness?
- Do we fully appreciate the depth of our need for forgiveness, or are we minimizing our sin?
- Are we regularly confessing our sins to God, trusting in His faithfulness to forgive and cleanse us?

The invitation is clear: to step into the light of God's truth, to be honest about our struggles with sin, and to experience the liberating power of His forgiveness. This is the path to true fellowship with God and with other believers.

As we journey forward, may we hold fast to the promise that God is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In Christ, we are both sinners and saints – aware of our ongoing need for grace, yet confident in the complete work of Jesus on our behalf.

Let us walk in the light, confessing our sins, and rejoicing in the purifying power of Christ's blood. For in this ongoing process, we find assurance of our salvation and the joy of deep, authentic fellowship with our perfect and unchanging God.