

“Walking in the Light”

(1 John 1:5-10 ~ Part 2)

Introduction

➤ “Idolatry does not begin with a sculptor’s hammer, it begins with the mind” (John MacArthur; *The Ultimate Priority*; p.9). We need to understand that our thoughts concerning God do not affect or alter God in any way. They do, however, influence how we live and what we worship. For a false view of God, which is tantamount to idolatry, will not only lead us away from God but also justly condemn us as false worshippers. Left to ourselves, apart from the divine knowledge that comes from God’s Word, we will create a god in our own likeness and according to our own desires (a god who thinks like us, wants what we want, always protects and prospers us, and never disagrees with us!).

✓ Illust: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. ...

When we try to imagine what God is like we must of necessity use that-which-is-not-God as the raw material for our minds to work on; hence whatever we visualize God to be, He is not, for we have constructed our image out of that which He has made and what He has made is not God. If we insist upon trying to imagine Him, we end with an idol, made not with hands but with thoughts; and an idol of the mind is as offensive to God as an idol of the hand. ...

Left to ourselves we tend immediately to reduce God to manageable terms. We want to get Him where we can use Him, or at least know where He is when we need Him. We want a God we can in some measure control. We need the feeling of security that comes from knowing what God is like, and what He is like is of course a composite of all the religious pictures we have seen, all the best people we have known or heard about, and all the sublime ideas we have entertained” (A.W. Tozer; *The*

Knowledge of the Holy; p.1, 8).

➤ We desperately need to a right understanding of who God is and what He demands concerning acceptable worship. Thankfully, we have access to the character and will of God through the Word of God – that is, the Scriptures. God has revealed Himself, and His will for our lives, through His Holy Word.

To know God, and to know about God, requires God’s own self-disclosure. We simply cannot imagine or comprehend God accurately without God’s divine revelation. No amount of monastic contemplation, soul searching, or naval-gazing, can will result in a true understanding of God. Thankfully, God has revealed Himself to us through His Holy Word.

1 John 1:5-10 ~ “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. ⁶If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But 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. ⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

➤ As we study 1 John 1:5-10, we find God – the doctrine of God – front and center, first and foremost. John first declares the doctrine about God, and then teaches us how to apply that doctrine.

A. The Doctrine Stated (vs.5)

➤ At the outset of this passage, we see John declaring a central and supreme doctrinal truth. First, notice that this truth did not originate with John or any of the apostles: “*This is the message we have heard from him*” (vs.5). The “*message*” (*angelia*) that John, and the apostles, “*proclaim[ed]*” (*anangellō*) came directly from the mouth of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God (see vs.3; cf. vs.1).

➤ Jesus not only declared that God is light, but that as the Son of God He Himself is light (see Jn.8:12; 12:35-36, 46). This is yet another reference where Jesus unambiguously and unapologetically declared Himself to be God (see Jn.5:18; 8:58-59; 10:30-33).

1. Affirmations

➤ This is that message: *“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all”* (vs.5). This is a simple, yet profound statement. For, by analogy, it is declaring a precious and powerful truth about God. It speaks to who God is, in His divine character and nature, as God. In fact, John here is stating the same thing twice – in two different ways – first positive and then negative.

Positive - *“God is light”* (vs.5).

Notice that John does not declare God as a light (i.e., a light among many lights), or even that God is the light (i.e., the greatest of all lights; though He is), but that He is light [translated literally: “The God is light”]. In other words, in His divine character and nature as God, God is light. Light is not something that God does, but something that He is. That is, God does not merely produce light, or shine (radiate) as light, but is – in and of Himself – light (e.g. God is Spirit; God is love, God is holy, etc.).

Again, John is not declaring a new truth about God (or his personal opinion about God). The teaching that God is light runs throughout Scripture (Ps.27:1; Jn.1:4-9; 3:19-21; Rev.21:22-23; 22:5). As we see, God is not partially light, sometimes light, or even mostly light – He *“is light”* in fullness and perfection. Likewise, God does not merely shine light but He (in and of Himself) *“is light.”*

Negative - *“in him is no darkness at all”* (vs.5).

On one hand, this is just another way to say the same thing. However, it is also more descriptive. For light dominates darkness. Light extinguishes darkness, darkness (by itself) cannot extinguish light. God’s light is so pure, so intense, so pervasive, so awesome, there is not a single speck, or trace, or shred of darkness (or shadow) in Him. As light, God is pure and full and perfect.

2. Interpretations

➤ Since the reference to *“God is light”* is analogous, metaphorical – as opposed to God is love, God is holy, God is Spirit – it can be a bit difficult to understand. To put it simply, as we see in Scripture, God as *“light”* symbolically refers to two different aspects of God’s divine nature.

Intellectually - “light” refers to biblical truth while “darkness” refers to error or falsehood (see Ps.119:105; Prov.6:23; Jn.1:4; 8:12).

The Bible reveals God as absolutely, perfectly, and infinitely knowledgeable. The doctrinal word for this is omniscience (i.e., all-knowing). There is literally nothing that God does not know. God’s knowledge is absolutely comprehensive, and utterly incomprehensible to us. Scripture repeatedly declares both of these truths (Ps.139:1-6; 147:5; Rom.11:33-36).

1 John 3:20 ~ “... [God] knows everything”

Only a being that is infinite and eternal, as God is, is capable of knowing everything. The doctrine of God’s omniscience teaches that God has perfect, exhaustive and infinite knowledge of all things past, present and future. God’s omniscience not only encompasses His absolute and eternal knowledge of us, but also of all creation. He not only has supreme and comprehensive knowledge of the past and present, but also of all future actions (inactions), events and choices – all actual and possible future outcomes.

Since *“God is light”* and *“in him is no darkness at all”* (vs.5), we know that God is never ignorant, nor does He ever lie. In fact, Scripture not only states that God does not lie (Num.23:19; Tit.1:2) but also that *“it is impossible for God to lie”* (Heb.6:18). God does not deceive; He does not error; He is never surprised, bewildered, or mistaken. He is never – absolutely never – “in the dark” about anything. God never scratches His head in confusion, nor is He ever pacing in heaven with anxiety. He knows all things perfectly, and is in absolutely control of all things (see Ps.115:3; 103:19; Rom.11:36).

Morally - “light” refers to holiness or purity while “darkness” refers to sin or wrongdoing (see Rom.13:11-14; 1Thess.5:4-7).

God is also absolutely, perfectly, infinitely holy. God never sins – in any way or to any degree. God is absolutely holy in His nature and character, and absolutely holy in everything He does and says. He is never guilty of sin, of wrongdoing, of evil, or of any impurity. God’s holiness is the perfect culmination of all His attributes. Everything God does and everything God is, is motivated, undergirded and expressed by His holiness.

To be holy is to be separate. God is utterly unlike us, He is perfect (unblemished) in purity (Rom.3:10-12; Eph.2:1-3). Again, as with God’s perfect and absolute knowledge, there *“is no darkness at all”* in His holiness; only the unmitigated *“light”* of His purity. The seraphim covered their eyes in the presence of God glorious holiness (Is.6:3). Moses’ face radiated/glowed from having just seen a momentary glimpse of God’s holy glory – such a terrifying, disturbing, sight to the Israelites that they made him put a veil on to cover it up (Ex.33-34; 2Cor.3:7ff).

It is important to know that God is not a slightly improved version of humans. God is the Creator, and we are His creation! God is light and Him is no darkness. We, on the other hand – apart from the saving work of Christ – are darkness and in us is no light. God is omniscient, we are foolish. God is holy, we are unholy.

- God is both “intellectually” perfect and “morally” pure; He is all-knowing and all-holy. Again, in the divinely inspired words of the apostle John: *“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all”* (vs.5). There is no darkness of sin, or ignorance, or error about God.

B. The Doctrine Applied (vs.6-10)

- After declaring the intellectual and moral perfection of God, which is also absolutely true of the Son of God (Jn.8:12; 12:46), the apostle John gives us several immediate applications. Saying, in effect, “Since God is who God is, this is how you as God’s children should be.” Or, to put it another way, “Since Christ is the light of God, Christians are to be the light of God in Christ.”

1 John 1:6-10 ~ “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But 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. ⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

- In these five verses we find five *“if”* (*ean*) statements. Each one serves as a point of application to the doctrine that *“God is light”* (vs.5). In essence, this passage is teaching us that since *“God is light”* – that is, because God is infinitely and perfectly knowledgeable and holy – these things will be true of every Christian. God’s children, those who by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone have been saved and sanctified, are to reflect the character and will of God. That is, we should walk in God’s wisdom and holiness.

Matt 5:48 ~ “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Eph 1:4 ~ “even as he [God] chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him [God]. ...” (see Col.1:22)

1 Peter 1:14-16 ~ “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

Prov 8:33 ~ “Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it.”

Eph 5:15-16 ~ “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” (see Col.4:5; Matt.10:16)

➤ These five truths, serve as “reality checks” for us from which we can examine the veracity and maturity of our Christian lives.

1. Reality Check #1 (vs.6)

➤ First, we read: *“If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth”* (vs.6). This addresses the problem of dishonesty or hypocrisy with regard to a person’s proclamation of being a Christian – saying they have *“fellowship”* (*koinōnia*) *“with [God]”* and yet living as though they have no fellowship with God. Someone who merely professes to know (or believe in) Christ, but does not seek/strive to follow (or obey) Christ. They claim to be in Christ (in the light), but they are actually walking in darkness.

➤ Notice the strong language used here by John: *“we lie and do not practice the truth”* (vs.6). Simply put, a mere profession of faith without an obedience to Christ is a false profession of faith.

1 John 2:3-6 ~ “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

Rom 6:1-2 ~ “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”

Rom 6:15 ~ “What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!”

➤ This, as we will clearly see, does not mean that a Christian’s life is perfect or sinless. Rather, it means that Christians are striving to live like Christ, to obey Christ, in a way that is pleasing to Christ (see Matt.7:24-27). A person cannot be a Christian and not a Christian at the same time. Biblically, there is no such thing as a “non-practicing”, “nominal”, or “carnal” Christian – all whom Scripture would identify as non-Christians or false believers. A person cannot be walking (living) in darkness, and walking (living) in the light at the same time.

1 John 2:8-11 ~ “At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. ⁹Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

John 14:15 ~ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

John 15:14 ~ “You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

Luke 6:46 ~ “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

➤ The truth is, a person can profess Christ and not possess Christ; a person can be in church and not in Christ; a person can know about God and not know God. God knows those who truly belong to Him (2Tim.2:19), He is neither ignorant nor deceived (Gal.6:7).

This first “reality check” is for to “*examine*” ourselves to see if we are truly in the faith (1Cor.11:28; 2Cor.13:5). The lives we live are great evidence of what we truly believe. We must strive to live a Christian life free from insincerity, hypocrisy, or dishonesty.

2. Reality Check #2 (vs.7)

➤ John then wrote: “*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*” (vs.7). This verse teaches us that two things happen when we truly walk in the light of God/Christ. First, true Christians “*have fellowship with one another*” because, together, they are in fellowship with Christ. As we have seen already in this book, the word “*fellowship*” (*koinonia*; vs.3^{2x}, 6, 7) refers to a personal relationship or partnership.

1 John 1:3 ~ “that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

John 17:20-23 ~ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” (see 1Cor.1:9; 2Cor.13:14)

- Christians share a sacred and spiritual fellowship with one another because they share a sacred and spiritual fellowship with the Triune God – Christ in us, we in Christ, Christ in the Father, the Father in Christ, the Father in us!
- ✓ **Illust:** People are united based on things they have in common. Driving home from Portland the other day, I noticed a number of people waving to one another based solely on the commonality of the vehicle they were driving. Truck drivers acknowledged one another by a subtle wave, those driving old/classic cars would recognize each other, and motorcyclists greeted one another with their unique, subtle, and cool hand-down-toward-the-ground gesture as they passed by (I’ve often thought it would be fun to get a motorcycle and wave obnoxiously as I passed some guy on a Harley – Tim would never speak to me again!).
- As Christians, we are likewise united by the things we have in common. But our unity is not based on material possession, or solely on our mutual likes or interests – something infinitely greater, and eternal. That which bonds Christians together supersedes anything/everything on this earth – no matter our gender, ethnicity, generation, language or race (see Rev.5:9; Gal.3:28). The bond Christians share as brothers and sisters in Christ transcends every personal, philosophical, political, biological, or national characteristic. Who we are in Christ – as Christians, Christ-followers – is the most important thing to us and about us.

This is not uniformity (we all look alike), or unanimity (we all agree on all things), but unity (we all share the same purpose and passion). In Christ, we share the same passion, the same purpose, the same Spirit, the same God, the same Lord, the same salvation, the same calling, the same faith, the same love, the same joy, the same (ultimate) truth, and the same (eternal) destiny.

Eph 4:4-6 ~ “There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Phil 2:2-3 ~ “complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

➤ The second thing that happens for those who truly walk in the light of Christ is that *“the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin”* (vs.7). The word *“cleanses”* (*katharizō*; from which our English word *“cathartic/catharsis”* is derived) means *“to purge”* or *“to make clean.”* It is imperative to note that only *“the blood of Jesus”* can cleanse us from sin.

✓ **Illust:** “It does not say – mark this, O my Soul – it does not say, ‘The blood of Jesus Christ cleansed,’ but ‘cleanseth.’ If guilt return, His power may be proved again and again – there is no fear that all my daily slips and shortcomings shall not be graciously removed by this precious blood” (Charles Spurgeon; sermon: “A Frail Leaf” (expository notes); September 28, 1911).

The imagery here is of the Passover Lamb (Ex.12). Prior to God’s delivering the Israelites from their enslavement to the Egyptians, God commanded the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb and to smear the blood of that lamb on the doorposts of their home. This was a In the New Testament, we see clearly that Jesus Christ – and the blood He shed during His crucifixion – is our perfect, eternal, all-sufficient sacrificial Lamb. Unlike the sacrificial offerings in the Old Testament (which were an illustration of the need for a “once-for-all” Savior, the sacrificial blood of Jesus truly cleanses (the believer) from all sin.

John 1:29 ~ “The next day [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’” (see Jn.1:36)

1 Peter 1:18-19 ~ “knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” (see Acts 8:32; 1Cor.5:7).

Heb 9:22 ~ “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”

Heb 10:4 ~ “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

Heb 10:12-14 ~ “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

Heb 10:19 ~ “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus”

Heb 13:12 ~ “So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.” (see Heb.13:20)

Eph 1:7 ~ “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace”

➤ It is also important to note that through *“the blood of Jesus”* we are forgiven of *“all sin”* (vs.7; *pas hamartia*). Not some sin, or even most sin, but all sin. Furthermore, this promise includes the whole of our sin not just part of our sin. Through the blood of Jesus, all true believers are forgiven of all sin – past, present, and future. God’s grace justifies us, it sustains us, and delivers us!

Isaiah 43:25 ~ “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

Isaiah 44:22 ~ “I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”

Psalms 103:10-12 ~ “[God] does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

1 John 1:9 ~ “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

➤ There is no sin too sinful that the Lord cannot forgive. No one is too sinful to be saved by God's grace. No one is beyond the reach of God's mercy. No one is deserving of God's salvation, and therefore no one can honestly say less that they are less deserving of God's saving grace. God's grace covers all sin, and can cleanse every sinner.

Rom 5:20-21 ~ "Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

3. Reality Check #3 (vs.8)

- This third reality check dovetails the previous statement: "*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*" (vs.8). This is another tremendous error. The first is living a hypocritical (false) Christian life – thinking that you can live in sin because/in light of God's grace (vs.7).
- The second is thinking that you do not need God's grace because you have "*no sin*" (vs.8). The apostle John calls it what it is: self-deception – "*we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*" (vs.8). It would seem that this "reality check" is specifically dealing with the person who professes to live a sinless life (whereas, in verse ten, we see the person who says they have never sinned). The teaching of the Christian living a sinless life is called "full sanctification" or "perfectionism."

Simply put, some advocates of "full sanctification" teach that a Christian will never sin after they are first converted (or once they receive a "second blessing" of the Holy Spirit). This stems from a misunderstanding of Scripture, and a gross minimizing of sin. For, according to Scripture, sin is much more than breaking one of the Ten Commandments. Sin is any action, inaction or attitude that is contrary to the will or word of God (see Matt.5:28; Jms.2:10, 4:17; Gal.3:10). We sin any time our thoughts, words, actions or attitudes are not in harmony with God's character or commands.

- Contrary to the teaching of "perfectionism" or "full sanctification", Christians do not live perfect or sinless lives in this life (see vs.12-14; Rom.7:14-25). Biblically, a Christian's holiness is a "progressive sanctification" rather than a "full sanctification. In other words, Christians continue to grow in holiness – becoming more and more conformed to the image of Christ (Rom.8:29). I think this saying expresses it well: "I'm not as sinful as I used to be, but I'm not as sinless as I need/want to be."

James 3:2 ~ "For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body."

Phil 3:12 ~ "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."

- We are cautioned here to not think we have no sin. Truly walking in the light of God, reveals a need to be ever pursuing greater holiness. To think that we have attained perfect – God-like – holiness in this life is a strong delusion and ultimately a damning deception.

4. Reality Check #4 (vs.9)

- Confession of sin is a critical part of a Christian's spiritual maturity and holiness. Simply put, "confession" is admitting or acknowledging your sin to God. The New Testament word "*confess*" (*homologeō*) literally means "to say again" or "to say the same." Meaning, when we confess our sins to God we are saying the same thing about us that God is saying about us – we are seeing ourselves as God sees us. When we confess our sins to God, we are not giving God any new knowledge. He already knows everything about us, everything we have ever done (i.e. every thought, word, action). Confession, then, is us acknowledging our sin before God, and seeking to restore our relationship with Him.

➤ In verse nine we read: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (vs.9). This does not mean that we earn God’s forgiveness by our confession. Confession is not a meritorious work, and God’s forgiveness cannot be earned (a person is saved by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone). Rather, through confession the believer draws closer to God becoming more and more conformed to the image of Christ. True confession promotes purity, humility, obedience and reference toward God.

➤ This verse is not stating a condition of God’s forgiveness, but His promise to be forgiving. This is not based on the merit of our confession, but on the character of God: *“he is faithful and just”* (vs.9). The fact that God is *“faithful”* (*pistos*) means God is absolutely trustworthy and perfectly honest. God not only does not lie, but Scripture records that God cannot lie – for lying would go against His nature and character as God (see Num.23:19; Heb.6:18; Tit.1:2). We can be assured of God’s forgiveness, because we know that God is faithful.

Isa 1:18 ~ “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.”

Lam 3:22-23 ~ “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

1 Tim 1:15 ~ “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”

➤ In addition, God is also *“just”* (*dikaios*). Because God is just, He cannot simply ignore or dismiss our sin. There must be justice *“for the wages of sin is death”* (Rom.6:23). Thankfully, Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross paid the full penalty of our sin – justifying believers according to the justice of God.

Rom 3:23-26 ~ “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Rom 5:1 ~ “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Gal 2:16 ~ “yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

➤ Through the substitutionary and sacrificial blood of Jesus, God’s one and only Son, God has promised – by His unfailing faithfulness and flawless justice – *“to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (vs.9).

1 John 1:7 ~ “... the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

5. Reality Check #5 (vs.10)

➤ In verse eight, we see that a person is self-deceived if they think they have no sin (*“we have no sin”*, vs.8). Here, in verse ten, we find the person who says they *“have not sinned”* (vs.10). This seems to be specifically speaking to those who profess to having never sinned. This false profession is so serious, so sinister, that John described it not as a self-deception (as in vs.8; *“we deceive ourselves”*) but as blasphemy – calling God *“a liar”* (*pseustēs*; vs.10).

✓Illust: This is readily seen in our atheistic society. Some people flat out deny their need for God because they refuse to seem themselves as a sinner – calling God a liar. Others, while admitting that they are not perfect, reject the notion that their sin is deserving of God’s judgment – again, calling God a liar.

✓Illust: “This self-justification clearly makes God a liar. For what does the cross of Calvary mean? What do those streams of blood mean? What do those agonies to the death mean? God has acted out a gigantic lie if we have no sin, for He has provided a propitiation for a thing which does not exist. O hideous profanity! O vile blasphemy, thus to insinuate that the great sacrifice of divine love was an acted falsehood! Brethren, we have sinned, sinned far beyond anything we know – and the only wise and true way is to confess it before God” (Charles H. Spurgeon; sermon: “Honest Dealing with God; June 20, 1875).

➤The Bible is abundantly clear that no one is sinless – everyone has sinned – and everyone stands in need of God’s saving grace.

Eccl 7:20 ~ “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”

Eph 2:1-3 ~ “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

Rom 3:10-12 ~ “as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹²All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.’”

Rom 3:23 ~ “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

➤Again, confession is literally acknowledging our sin before God – saying the same thing about us that He knows to be true about us. This is why saying we have not sinned, or refusing to repent of sin, is effectively declaring that God is wrong – more than that – it is calling God “*a liar*” (vs.10). This is the exact opposite of confession. Ironically, a person saying that they “*have not sinned*” is calling God “*a liar*” which is a sin.

➤Naturally, the person who is self-deceived does not have the truth within them (vs.8). Here, in verse ten, we find the person who blasphemes God – by calling Him a liar – has not the word of God in them: “*If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*” (vs.10). This is a devastating, potentially damning, declaration. For, ultimately, refusing to see yourself as a sinner is the sin of unbelief – rejecting Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. It can be condemning evidence of a life devoid of “*the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*” (2Cor.4:4), a life where the seed of God’s Word has fallen on hardened or uncultivated soil of an unreceptive heart (Matt.13:1-9, 16-23), a life that is not truly abiding in Christ, an unfruitful branch that is “*thrown into the fire, and burned*” (Jn.15:6).

Conclusion

➤Let me close with this Scriptural prayer, and encourage you to pray this with me:

Ps 139:23-24 ~ “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ²⁴And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”